



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 June 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:38 P.M., 14 June 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Beer and Public Houses: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan:

[\[10611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of national covid-19 lockdown's on the pub and brewery sector; what plans he has to support the recovery of that sector from those lockdowns; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government has brought forward a substantial package of financial support for the hospitality sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £65 billion plan to provide support for jobs and businesses (including the hospitality sector), with extensions to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, self-employed support, business grants, loans and VAT cuts – bringing total fiscal support to over £352 billion.

■ Biofuels: Subsidies

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[12071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of biomass electricity subsidies on deforestation; what provisions are in place to minimise that impact; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK only supports biomass which complies with strict sustainability criteria, and electricity generators receive subsidies only for compliant biomass.

The criteria ensure that the carbon stock and area of the forest, irrespective of its location, is not decreased. The evidence does not show that deforestation has occurred in the areas from where UK electricity generators source their biomass.

The sustainability criteria require that biomass fuels are sourced from forest waste wood and residues from commercial forestry operations, and that the forest owner adheres to the relevant legal requirements to protect biodiversity and the environment.

Suppliers must demonstrate to the regulators (Ofgem) that they meet the criteria, and their evidence is independently audited.

■ Cement: Shortages

Drew Hendry:

[12191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of relevant industry bodies on the shortage of bagged cement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is aware that some products including cement are in short supply nationally. At present, supply of these products is not keeping pace with demand, and strong demand during 2020 reduced existing stocks.

In light of this, the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force has established a Product Availability Working Group, comprised of product manufacturers, builders' merchants and suppliers, contractors of all sizes, and housebuilders. The Task Force continues to monitor the supply and demand of products, and identify those in short supply. The Task Force also issues regular statements on product availability. The statements include detailed updates on the availability of specific products in affected material areas in order to keep the market informed. They can be accessed at <https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/>.

■ Clean Steel Fund

Seema Malhotra:

[13071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) the steel industry and (b) meeting the UK's net zero targets of the clean steel fund not starting until 2023.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department announced the Clean Steel Fund (CSF) in 2019 and developments are currently underway. This policy will take time to design in order to be delivered effectively.

Based on previous evidence, complex decarbonisation projects have long lead-in times and take time to set up. Due to this and other factors, the steel sector indicated in response to the 2019 Call for Evidence that their preference is for the CSF to be launched in 2023. Other schemes are available to support the sector and are live now, including the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.

Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the Government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, indicated our commitment to work with the Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

■ Construction: Procurement**Mark Menzies:** [\[10338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help businesses in the construction sector tackle (a) supply chain issues and (b) the resulting increased costs.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is aware that a range of building materials are in short supply nationally. This is driven by demand and increased global competition to secure supplies.

In light of this, and in view of more local disruptions in the supply of some products, the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force has established a Product Availability Working Group, comprised of product manufacturers, builders' merchants and suppliers, contractors of all sizes, and housebuilders. The Task Force continues to monitor the supply and demand of products, and identify those in short supply.

■ Coronavirus: Government Assistance**Rachael Maskell:** [\[10494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of covid-19 business support grants that were paid directly to property owners whose tenants were granted that funding.

Rachael Maskell: [\[10495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of Government grants that are held in off-shore bank accounts by business landlords.

Rachael Maskell: [\[10496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what data his Department holds on (a) landlords that are the ultimate recipients of covid-19 business support grants and (b) the UK tax status of those landlords.

Rachael Maskell: [\[10498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to require landlords that have received covid-19 business support grants from the Government to support their tenants in the event that a tenant business goes into administration because it can no longer afford its lease due to financial difficulties resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to continuing to provide financial support via Local Authorities for businesses that are required to close, or which are severely affected by the restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives.

Both non-rate paying and rate paying businesses have been invited to apply for Covid business grants individually. The different elements of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) and the mandatory grant schemes are designed so that both rate paying and non-rate paying businesses have access to grants. The ARG is a discretionary grant scheme and Local Authorities will decide whether to pay the business ratepayer or the occupying business (or both).

The Government has introduced a range of measures to support tenants struggling to pay rent: we introduced legislation that provides a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases owing to the non-payment of rent, reducing the ability of landlords to evict tenants if they cannot pay their rent due to Covid-19 restrictions. Government has also restricted landlords' abilities to seize goods in lieu of unpaid rent by making changes to the use of Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery. We are protecting businesses from insolvency introducing, via the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020, restrictions on the service of statutory demands and winding-up petitions.

All these measures are in place until 30 June and we will make an announcement before then on their future. Government published a Code of Practice to help support rent negotiations and on 6 April published additional guidance to help landlords and tenants that have not yet been able to reach agreement about accrued rent arrears and ongoing lease terms.

Both BEIS and UKRI have refused grant payments to companies that cannot get a UK bank account in their own name. The BEIS Grant funding agreement template includes the condition that payments must be into a bank located in the UK.

We do not hold any of the further data requested. Data on Government allocations to, and payments by, Local Authorities, for Government Business Support Grants, is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Michael Fabricant:

[10158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether advanced orders placed for new covid-19 vaccines such as the Janseen vaccine will be designed around the latest variants known to be in existence at the time of delivery.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK Government has secured early access to 397 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with six separate vaccine developers. This includes agreements with:

- Pfizer/BioNTech for 100 million doses
- University of Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses

- Janssen for 20 million doses
- Valneva for 100 million doses

In addition, the Government has a reservation agreement with GlaxoSmithKline/Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses and a non-binding agreement with CureVac for 50 million doses.

The Government is working closely with vaccine manufacturers and Public Health England to understand the efficacy of our current vaccine portfolio against new variants and will continue to monitor the picture with variants as it develops. The Government announced on 3 June 2021 that it has started commercial negotiations with AstraZeneca for future supplies of the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine that have been adapted to tackle the Beta variant first identified in South Africa.

■ Electricity Generation: Fees and Charges

Stephen Flynn:

[\[10647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the report published in May 2021 by the Renewables Infrastructure Development Group entitled Charging The Wrong Way, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding in that report that EU electricity generators pay £0.46 per megawatt hour (MWh) in transmission system charges while the average payment in Scotland is £6.42 per MWh.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Transmission charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator, and it is currently reviewing some aspects of these charging arrangements, with plans to consult on proposals this year. The Department is in close touch with Ofgem to understand how its proposals can help support delivery of a secure, net zero energy system at lowest cost for consumers. Most major investment in new renewable generation projects continues to be underpinned by Contracts for Difference arrangements introduced by the UK Government, and for which overseas generators are not eligible to bid.

■ Energy: Young People

Mark Menzies:

[\[10337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to create opportunities for young people in (a) the nuclear sector and (b) the wider green energy industry.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS is a member of the industry-led Nuclear Skills Strategic Group (NSSG), which brings together employers, government, regulators, and trades unions to address the skills challenge and drives major skills developments in the nuclear sector. The NSSG has developed a long-term [Nuclear Skills Strategic Plan](#) which incorporates a variety of activities, including those to recruit more young people in the nuclear sector. As part of the Strategic Plan, the following are expected to be delivered.

- Offer work experience placements for students in schools, further education, and higher education through industry collaboration.
- Recruit 2,000 new starts every year through local apprenticeships.
- Increase diversity, with expectation that female workforce should increase from 22%, to 40% by 2030.

We continue to engage and support as the plan is delivered.

We are determined to seize the once-in-a-generation economic opportunities of the net zero transition, delivering a green industrial revolution, by creating new business opportunities and supporting up to 2 million green jobs by 2030 across all regions of the UK. In order to ensure we have the skilled workforce to deliver net zero and our Ten Point Plan, we have launched the Green Jobs Taskforce, working in partnership with business, skills providers, and unions to advise on how we can deliver the green jobs of the future.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Finance

Alan Brown:

[10490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6353 on Technology: Environment Protection, how many applications were (a) received and (b) rejected from (i) Scotland, (ii) England and (iii) Wales for the competitions referenced in that Answer.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Direct Air Capture (DAC) and Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) Innovation Programme provided funding for projects up to £250,000. The competition was open to applications throughout the UK. The results are as follows:

1. Scotland submitted 5 applications of which 2 were unsuccessful.
2. England submitted 39 applications of which 20 were unsuccessful.
3. Wales did not submit any applications.
4. Northern Ireland submitted 1 application, it was unsuccessful.

For the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) GGR demonstrators programme, the successful project for the central directorate hub included England and Scottish institutions. Of the two that were unsuccessful, one had only English institutions and the other had a combination of English/Scottish institutions.

For the GGR demonstrators programme a total of 16 projects were submitted. 5 projects were successful of which:

- 5 included English institutions.
- 4 included Welsh institutions.
- 4 included Scottish institutions.

Of the 11 unsuccessful projects:

- 11 included English institutions.
- 8 included Scottish institutions.
- 1 included a Welsh institution.

■ Heating: Hospitality Industry

Steve Double:

[\[10472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to publish an assessment of the potential average costs to (a) pubs, restaurants and cafes and (b) bed and breakfast, hotels and self-catering accommodation providers associated with the decarbonisation of heating proposals contained within the forthcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Alongside the Heat and Buildings Strategy, the Government aims to consult on new regulations to phase out fossil fuel heating in businesses and public buildings off the gas grid. We will publish an impact assessment alongside this consultation, which will include details on additional upfront costs to non-domestic buildings for transitioning to low carbon heating. The impact assessment will not break down the cost by building or occupancy type, however.

The Government acknowledges the need to take a fair and proportionate approach in the support it provides businesses on their path to net zero. We will seek views on how to best support businesses transition to low-carbon heating through the upcoming consultation.

■ Help to Grow Scheme

Seema Malhotra:

[\[13074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many have businesses registered for (a) Help to Grow: Management and (b) Help to Grow: Digital programmes to date.

Paul Scully:

As of 10 June, over 11,000 SMEs have registered their interest in the Help to Grow Digital scheme. Further details on launch will be announced in due course.

As of 10 June, 10,000 SMEs have registered their interest in the Help to Grow Management scheme.

■ Hospitality Industry: Recruitment

Seema Malhotra:

[\[13073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support recruitment in the hospitality sector.

Paul Scully:

The Department regularly meets with representatives from across the sector to discuss how it can recover and build back better from the pandemic.

We offer generous incentives to employers to recruit staff, with hundreds of young people starting work every day through the Kickstart Scheme. We are providing employers with a hiring incentive for each new apprentice they hire and have increased the payment to £3,000 for each newly hired apprentice of any age, helping more people to kick start or upskill their career across a broad range of industries. We are also investing £126 million in additional support to help create 40,000 more traineeships in England, funding high-quality work placements and training for 16-24-year olds in 2021-22.

Hydrogen: Trade Promotion**Alexander Stafford:**[\[10724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has with the President of COP26 to use the COP26 to promote the UK's green hydrogen sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This year the UK will use its Presidency at COP26 to bring countries together to commit to a cleaner energy future. This will include helping to drive efforts to develop a global hydrogen economy – building on many countries' recent ambitious commitments to expand low carbon hydrogen production, including the UK's.

COP26 provides us with a timely opportunity to harness this momentum and galvanise joined-up action to help the world move at pace to unlock hydrogen's potential, both to reduce emissions and support economic development. We will highlight the importance of a shared understanding of the role of low-carbon hydrogen in meeting global climate goals, build support for our vision of coordinated action, and promote the UK as a global leader.

Industry: South Wales**Ben Lake:**[\[10571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the South Wales Industrial Cluster will publish its first progress report.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The South Wales Industrial Cluster is supported by £20 million of UK Government funding through the Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge to support the rollout of decarbonisation technologies. It is not required to publish progress reports, although it may decide to do so as part of its public engagement activities. However, the cluster is required to attend quarterly monitoring meetings with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to ensure that progress is in line with agreed scope and milestones and that any risks are being managed appropriately.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Ben Lake: [\[10568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's plans are to (a) ensure the long-term future of the steel industry in Wales and (b) decarbonise Welsh steelmaking.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises the vital role the sector plays in all the areas of the UK and our economy. On 12 March, my noble Friend the Minister for Investment (Lord Grimstone) launched the Steel Procurement Taskforce to explore what government and industry can do to address challenges the sector has reported facing and it is due to report its findings in the autumn.

Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the Government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, commits to work with the newly constituted Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

In order to support these efforts, the Government has announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes.

Ben Lake: [\[10570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of the Welsh hydrogen sector to support hydrogen-based steelmaking in Wales.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#), published on 17 March, commits to working with the newly constituted Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

Hydrogen-based steelmaking, CCUS and electrification are some of the technological approaches being examined as part of this process. The Steel Council offers the forum for government, industry and trade unions to work in partnership on the shared objective of creating an achievable, long-term plan to support the sector's transition to a competitive, sustainable and low carbon future.

In order to support these efforts, the Government has announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector UK Steel sector, including in Wales to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The decarbonisation of the steel sector and industry more widely will also be supported through the £1 billion CCUS Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and £240m Net-Zero Hydrogen Fund.

Ben Lake:

[\[10572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using (a) hydrogen and (b) carbon capture, utilisation and storage to decarbonise steel production at Port Talbot.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Decarbonising UK industry is a core part of the government's ambitious plan for the green industrial revolution. The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, published on 17 March, commits government to work with the Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

The UK is engaged in key international initiatives focused on industry decarbonisation and we are engaging with a range of stakeholders in Germany, Sweden and China (as well as other countries) to better understand the latest plans to decarbonise steel production.

Hydrogen, electrification, and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) are the main technological options being examined as part of this process. The industry decarbonisation pathways technical annex of the strategy (pg. 153-155) presents two possible options for the decarbonisation of the iron and steel industry: Our wide-ranging support also includes: providing over £500m in recent years to help with the costs of energy; a £315m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, which aims to support businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and reduce carbon emission; and our £250m Clean Steel Fund that will support the decarbonisation of the steel sector .

Ben Lake:

[\[10573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effect on employment levels and (b) costs associated with retaining primary steelmaking capacity at Port Talbot.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises the importance of steelmaking at Port Talbot to the supply chains for many key advanced UK manufacturing sectors, as well as for direct and indirect jobs in South Wales.

We are firmly committed to supporting a sustainable, long-term future for steelmaking in the UK. We continue to work closely with Tata, the Welsh Government and trade union representatives as the company shapes its future business strategy for the plant.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[13072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to support hydrogen pilots in steel production.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#), published on 17 March, commits to work with the newly constituted Steel Council to consider the implications of the recommendation of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

Hydrogen-based steelmaking, CCUS*, and electrification are some of the technological approaches being examined as part of this process. The Steel Council offers the forum for government, industry and trade unions to work in partnership on the shared objective of creating an achievable, long-term plan to support the sector's transition to a competitive, sustainable and low carbon future.

In order to support these efforts, the Government has announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The decarbonisation of the steel sector and industry more widely will also be supported through the £1 billion CCUS Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and £240m Net-Zero Hydrogen Fund.

**carbon capture, utilisation and storage*

■ Job Security**Rachael Maskell:**[\[12197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on ending precarious work.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to bringing forward an Employment Bill when the time is right, to protect and enhance worker's rights as we build back better from the pandemic. In the meantime, we will continue to take necessary action to support businesses and protect jobs.

We have already made good progress in bringing forward legislation to protect workers' rights including:

- Closing a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers.
- Quadrupling the maximum fine for employers who treat their workers badly.
- Giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one.

■ Minerals: Procurement**Alexander Stafford:**[\[10718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of (a) technology in the critical minerals supply chain and (b) the Government in catalysing usage of that technology.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[10719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of assured data in mineral supply chains including in (a) specific commodities, (b) trade corridors, and (c) benefit generation.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[10720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to develop the technology and standards for (a) traceability, (b) sustainable development goal-compliance and (c) whole life assurance of mineral use in the critical minerals supply chain.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[10721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of Government in the stimulus and advancement of deployment of technology including distributed ledger technology that is used in distributed systems (a) for critical minerals and (b) more widely.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[10723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to support assured data technology for critical minerals.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government understands the importance of technology-critical minerals and metals supply chains to the economy, as well as the importance of the role of technology (including distributed ledger technology), data and collaborative ventures in the supply chains for these vital materials. This close interest extends across Whitehall and so a range of input is needed to provide a holistic understanding of resilience issues across Departments. We are working towards a single Government vision in this crucial area, and our priority is to enable effective inter-departmental collaboration to drive unified and coordinated Government action to support this sector.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Valuation**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[10301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 181214, in circumstances where the Valuation Office Agency failed to add a business to the Local Rating List in advance of 11 March 2020, as the result of an admitted administrative error on the part of the Agency, whether local authorities should (a) treat affected business applicants as if such errors had been rectified at the time a Business Support Grant was due to be issued and (b) be compensated for the additional cost of those applications.

Paul Scully:

As the question does not specify which grant scheme it relates to, I am responding under the assumption that it refers to the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF), and

the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) which were affected by the 11 March 2020 date.

Local Authorities were responsible for delivering grants to eligible businesses through these schemes, and they closed for applications on 28 August 2020. As stated in the Grant Funding Schemes guidance, businesses that were in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief as of 11 March 2020 were in scope of the SBGF. Businesses in scope of the RHLGF were those that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) on 11 March 2020, with properties that have a rateable value of under £51,000.

The guidance is clear that Local Authorities were not required to adjust, pay or recover grants where the ratings list is subsequently amended retrospectively to 11 March 2020. However, Local Authorities had the discretion to depart from this if they knew that the record was incorrect - for example where it was factually clear to the Local Authority that the rating list was inaccurate on 11 March; but they were not obliged to do so.

We asked Local Authorities to close the SBGF and RHLGF schemes by 28 August 2020 and to ensure that, where any payments were still in process, they were completed by 30 September 2020. The only exceptions were those relating to a VOA / Ombudsman query, in which case payments could be made until 30 October. The 30 October date was negotiated to allow VOA queries to be resolved, but any that were not paid out by then are outside the scope of the schemes.

■ Re-employment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish legislative proposals on fire and rehire.

Paul Scully:

This Government has been clear that we expect employers to treat their employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership. Using threats about firing and rehiring as a negotiation tactic is unacceptable. We expect employers and employees to negotiate new terms and conditions and there are laws around how this must be done, and legal protections in place when firms are considering redundancies.

We asked Acas to conduct an evidence-gathering exercise to improve our evidence base. We welcome Acas' report on this work which was published on 8 June.

It finds general agreement that fire and rehire should only be used in limited circumstances – such as to prevent job losses when other options have been exhausted. At times, negotiations will sometimes fail and employers may need to make difficult decisions, in order to avoid redundancies and to ensure their business can survive and succeed. We have therefore asked Acas to produce clearer and more comprehensive guidance to help employers explore all the options before considering 'fire and rehire'.

■ Renewable Energy: Scotland

Stephen Flynn:

[\[10646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last met with representatives of OFGEM to discuss transmission charging costs for renewables projects in Scotland.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS Ministers and officials meet regularly with representatives of Ofgem to discuss a range of energy related matters, including transmission charging arrangements for renewable generation projects in Scotland and across GB.

■ Skilled Workers: Vacancies

Helen Hayes:

[\[10535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the income foregone to the UK economy as a result to STEM skills shortages; and what steps his Department is taking to work with local authorities and Combined Authority Mayors to tackle skill shortages locally.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises the need to tackle skills shortages in STEM occupations and is encouraging more students, across all areas of the country, into STEM education and training at all stages from primary school to higher education. Improving take up of STEM subjects is vital for the UK's future economic needs and to drive up productivity.

In order to ensure a strong pipeline of qualified students into higher education and careers in STEM areas, the Department for Education has committed substantial spending on mathematics, digital and technical education to increase take-up and better teaching of STEM subjects in schools.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) works closely with Department of Education (DfE) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and other departments to understand the impact of skills shortages in England, nationally, across sectors, and across regions. The Skills Advisory Panels' recent Local Skills Reports are a valuable source for understanding skills need across all parts of England. The Skills and Productivity Board will draw on intelligence, evidence, and data from a range of local partners and businesses to understand skills demand as we seek to build back better.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn:

[\[10162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of small businesses fined by Companies House and HMRC during the covid-19 outbreak for late (a) filing and (b) payment; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Companies House registers companies, not businesses. The information currently filed with Companies House does not allow it to determine company size. Therefore, it cannot determine the number of small companies that have been subject to a late filing penalty. However, the total number of Civil Penalties raised during the period 1st April 2020 to 31st May 2021 are 241,918.

In order to assist companies affected by the pandemic, measures were put in place by the Department, including allowing companies extra time to file accounts. Also, any appeal to the Registrar against paying a penalty on the grounds a company has been impacted by the pandemic immediately before the filing deadline are being treated sympathetically.

■ Social Services: Minimum Wage**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[10433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to protect workers in (a) the social care sector and (b) other sectors from exploitative employment practices following the March 2021 decision of the Supreme Court that social care staff are not entitled to the national minimum wage for every hour of sleep-in shifts.

Paul Scully:

The Supreme Court's unanimous judgment published on 19 March provides legal clarity. The Government has published updated guidance on sleep-in shifts and the National Minimum Wage, which applies to all sectors of the economy throughout the UK.

HM Revenue and Customs is responsible for enforcing National Minimum Wage legislation, and since 2015 has ordered employers to pay arrears of £100 million to one million workers. HMRC follows up on every worker complaint received, even those which are anonymous. This includes complaints made via the online complaint form or the Acas helpline and those received from other sources. In recent months, HMRC has also produced and advertised a webinar aimed at helping care providers understand particular issues in the social care sector.

My Hon. Friends the Minister of State for Care and the Minister for Children and Families have written to commissioners of social care services to emphasise that Local Authorities should be working with providers to ensure that they are complying with legislation and also ensuring that care workers are supported and remunerated so to retain a stable workforce.

The Government is also committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals later in 2021.

■ Technology: Carbon Emissions

Alan Brown:

[\[10488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6348 on Technology: Environment Protection, how much money was allocated from the UKRI's Strategic Priority Fund to the low carbon fund.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Of the £166 million announced for green technology, £31.5 million comes from the Strategic Priority Fund.

Alan Brown:

[\[10489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6348 on Technology: Environment Protection, how much money was allocated from the Industrial Strategy Industrial Energy Transformation Fund to the low carbon fund.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The £166 million funding for green technology refers to several initiatives run by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) is one of these.

The 2018 Budget announced £315 million to help high energy users in industry to cut their energy bills and carbon emissions. BEIS delivers £289 million through the IETF in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, while the Scottish Government has put its £26 million share towards a Scottish equivalent. This funding is available through several competition windows. Guidance on how to apply in IETF Phase 1 is available online, while details of future rounds will be published later this year. There have been no transfers of money between the £289m IETF and other funds.

The £16.5 million announced in May 2021 refers to the first winners from the Phase 1: Summer 2020 competition of the IETF. These 14 projects will help to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions at industrial sites. A second tranche of winners from this competition will be announced later this year, once projects are ready to start. Headline results from this competition had been announced in January 2021, but the company names and details of their projects are newly released.

■ Water Power: Finance

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[12933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 7 June 2021 to Question 7070, what assessment he has made of the effect of the absence of a minima or maxima for wave and tidal stream technologies within Contract for Difference auctions on those technologies' ability to compete successfully in those auctions.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on what scope there is for marine technologies across the UK including how the Contract for Difference competitive allocation process could most effectively support early commercial deployments of innovative marine technologies. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and we are now considering policy related to wave and tidal stream energy in light of the information received from the Call for Evidence.

We will publish specific allocation round parameters in advance of the next auction. This will include the details of whether any technology-specific minima will apply.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Arts: EU Countries**

Kevin Brennan: [\[12963\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when UK-EU reciprocal touring arrangements will be discussed at the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council.

Catherine West: [\[13159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has plans to discuss (a) EU touring for musicians and other creatives professionals and (b) the proposal for a bespoke UK-EU visa waiver for the creative industry at the next meeting of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council.

Penny Mordaunt:

At the first UK-EU Partnership Council on 9 June, the UK raised the issues faced by touring performers and noted work under way with Member States to try to resolve the barriers presented by visa and work permit requirements. The UK and EU have not yet agreed a date or agenda for the next Partnership Council. We continue to discuss these issues with all EU Member States to find solutions that work for our great creative industries.

■ **Coronavirus: Monuments**

Justin Madders: [\[10455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on introducing memorials across the UK in remembrance of people who have died from covid-19.

Afzal Khan: [\[11654\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timetable is for announcing the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.

Julia Lopez:

While the Government's immediate focus is on protecting the lives and livelihoods of the nation, there is nonetheless the need to mourn those who have died, and to mark and remember this period as one of immense struggle.

The Prime Minister announced on 12 May that the Government will establish a UK Commission on COVID Commemoration to consider the appropriate way to remember those who have lost their lives and to recognise those involved in the unprecedented response. The Government will set out the Commission membership and terms of reference in due course.

■ Government Departments: Procurement**Seema Malhotra:****[13075]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government is making on meeting its target of spending 33 per cent of its procurement budget with SMEs by March 2022.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to my [answer to PQ 2999](#) on 24 May 2021.

■ GREAT**Emily Thornberry:****[12994]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which countries will not be among the 145 that will be targeted by his Department's refreshed GREAT campaign launched on 9 June 2021.

Julia Lopez:

Since the GREAT campaign was first launched in 2012, the campaign has been extended to 145 countries. GREAT campaign activity is supported by a certain level of diplomatic presence in a country. No country is specifically out of scope for the campaign, there are countries where there is not sufficient presence to support campaign activity.

■ Identity Cards**Janet Daby:****[10645]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has plans to provide a photo identification card for every British citizen free of charge as a form of identification for general purposes.

Charlotte Nichols:**[10685]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) need for voters to provide identification during elections and (b) potential effect that policy may have on particular demographics who may be less likely to hold identification.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ188127](#) on 29 April 2021.

Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/voter-identification-faqs>.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[10661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will allow up to 60 people to attend weddings after the 21 June 2021.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[11575\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government will publish updated guidance on any covid-19 restrictions on weddings taking place after 21 June 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

We recognise that any restrictions on weddings may be disappointing for those planning such events. We do not wish to keep restrictions in place for any longer than we have to.

At Step 4, which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the Government aims to remove all restrictions on weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and receptions.

The decision on whether to proceed to Step 4 will be taken a week in advance of 21 June in order to take into account the latest data. Guidance will then be updated as soon as possible.

COP26**■ Renewable Energy: Seas and Oceans****Alan Brown:** [\[7866\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 3953 on Renewable Energy: Seas and Oceans, if he will publish a list of the companies he has met.

Alan Brown: [\[7867\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 3953 on Renewable Energy: Seas and Oceans, when he plans to confirm the final listing of Scottish Renewable Energy companies that will be utilised to promote Scotland's marine renewables sector.

Alok Sharma:

The government publishes details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations on a quarterly basis. Transparency returns for Cabinet Office Ministers can be found [here](#).

The UNFCCC will publish a list of participants who attended COP26 at the end of the conference. An events programme and list of exhibitors within the UK Government managed Green Zone will be made available to the public in due course.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Applications

Darren Jones: [R] [\[10561\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how many applications were accepted from organisations applying for a presence at COP26.

Darren Jones: [R] [\[10562\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will publish a category breakdown of the successful applications to have a presence at COP26.

Alok Sharma:

The Government ran an Expression of Interest process earlier this year to identify stakeholder interest in participating within UK Government managed spaces at the summit, receiving 3,966 proposals from across 93 countries. Following an extensive evaluation process, we have longlisted a range of proposals for further consideration. At this stage, no organisation has received confirmation of space within UK Government managed spaces at the summit.

An events programme and list of exhibitors within the UK Government managed Green Zone will be made available to the public in due course.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse: [\[12233\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether delegates to the COP26 conference arriving from a red or amber list country will be (a) required to self-isolate on arrival or (b) exempt from covid-19 quarantine measures.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[12234\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what the deadline is for the decision on whether COP26 will be held in person or online.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[12235\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of reduced attendance by international delegates at COP26.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[12236\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether the Government has plans to provide financial support for covid-19 quarantine measures to international delegates to COP26.

Alok Sharma:

We want COP26 to be a physical event in Glasgow this November. That is the basis on which we are planning, and we are ensuring that we are exploring all measures to ensure the event is safe for participants and safe for the people of Glasgow.

We are working through the process to determine what mitigation measures are needed to safely host COP26, including for people from countries on our amber and red lists at the time of the conference. We will continue to work with colleagues in the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, Public Health bodies and the UN to explore the most appropriate measures; including testing, quarantine, vaccines and other COVID security measures. As announced at the G7 Summit, in order to enable more representatives to attend safely the UK will work to provide vaccines to those accredited delegations who would be unable to get them otherwise.

We will provide delegates and the House with an update in due course.

DEFENCE

■ Aircraft Carriers: Operating Costs

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of operating each aircraft carrier each year.

Jeremy Quin:

In order to ensure a full response I will write to the right. Hon Member.

■ Aircraft Carriers: Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the drone requirements for each of the aircraft carriers.

Jeremy Quin:

Autonomy and uncrewed systems are at the forefront of our developmental thinking, and of the Future Maritime Aviation Force. The intent is to expand experimentation of Uncrewed Air Systems with Royal Navy vessels, including the Queen Elizabeth Class carriers, in the coming years.

■ Ajax Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of whether AJAX is able to reach initial operating capability if its operators must wear headsets for protection against noise and vibration.

Jeremy Quin:

Due to the nature of the operating environment, all Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) crews must and do wear headsets. As well as providing protection against noise, AFV headsets are critical for the provision of internal crew communications as well as radio communications with other vehicles.

The headsets currently being trialled for use by Ajax operators must ensure crew communications, radio communications and protection against the noise signature of

the Ajax vehicles. The trials that are underway are specifically designed to ensure this. Headsets do not provide protection against vibration.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[11488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many capability drops there are in the delivery of the Ajax Scout; how many vehicles are in each of those drops; what the breakdown is of different variants in each of those drops; and what the planned (a) start and (b) finishing date is for each of those drops.

Jeremy Quin:

There are five capability drops (0,1,2,3,4). Capability Drop 4 will be the final build standard and all vehicles will be retrofitted to this standard.

VARIANT							
DESCRIPTION	VARIANT	TOTAL	DROP 0	DROP 1	DROP 2	DROP 3	DROP 4
Recce Scout AJAX		245		21	25	72	127
Recce Sp APC	ARES	93	6	9	18	25	35
Recce ES Repair	APOLLO	50		7	9	13	21
Recce ES Recovery	ATLAS	38		7	7	14	10
C2 (Command & Control)	ATHENA	112		6	16	27	63
Eng Recce	ARGUS	51		2	11	4	34
Total		589	6	52	86	155	290

Drop 0 is complete with an on-going rolling programme from Drop 1 through to Drop 4. Drop 1 commenced mid 2020 with Drop 4 currently planned to complete by the end of 2024. The Ajax delivery schedules are currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Defence and GDLS-UK.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[12965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Ajax Scout Gateway Reviews 1, 2 and 3 were.

Jeremy Quin:

A number of strategic assessment gateway reviews have been held and a Gateway 4 Review was held in March 2021.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department was first informed of vibration issues identified during Ajax Armoured Vehicle programme trials.

Jeremy Quin:

As preparation activity for the Capability Drop 1 vehicles at the end of 2019, some soldiers were invited to do pre-trials training on prototype variants. Whilst the on-board sensors did not register any issues subsequently there were anecdotal reports of vibration.

A small number of soldiers engaged in Entry Qualification Trials reported noise and vibration characteristics in July 2020 and in September 2020 a medical staff report raised possibility of noise injuries. As a result, the Authority commissioned in-ear assessments through the Army environmental health team. Evidence from this led to the immediate stop of all dynamic vehicle training on 6 November 2020.

The Authority has subsequently commissioned independent trials with Millbrook Proving Ground to provide an independent assessment of the vibration data provided by General Dynamics which we expect to report in late July 2021.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which specific head protection equipment is being used by the Household Cavalry whilst undertaking tests on the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

We are currently trialling a number of headset options with our industry partner to find the most appropriate solution. Due to commercial sensitivities it would not be appropriate to provide further details at this stage.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the demonstration phase for firing on the move will conclude for the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The demonstration work for firing the Ajax canon is being carried out in a number of sequential steps for the vehicle and targets. Static versus static firing has been demonstrated; static versus moving firing demonstration has started; and moving versus moving is due to complete in late 2022.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department or any of its agencies commissioned any noise and/or vibration studies on Ajax Scout in the last five years.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[12967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when Defence Equipment and Support undertook their own analysis on vibration issues for the Ajax vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

Noise and vibration assessments are standard parts of the industry contracted development and trials activity whilst vehicles were operated by industry. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has continued to work together with General Dynamics in assessing the vehicle. Additional MOD assessments have been undertaken following more recent Army crewed acceptance trials, which identified potential issues.

The MOD commissioned testing by the Institute of Naval Medicine (INM) in May 2020. These were conducted in August 2020 and investigated both noise and vibration. In addition, the Army's Environmental Health Team, supported by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, conducted "in-ear" assessments of military crews of AJAX platforms between 31 October and 5 November 2020.

The MOD has since commissioned independent Millbrook trials for vibration which are currently ongoing and due to report in late July 2021.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[12966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will publish the report commissioned to Millbrook Proving Ground on AJAX.

Jeremy Quin:

There are no plans to publish the report resulting from the AJAX vibration trial at Millbrook Proving Ground.

■ Alford: Bomb Disposal**Jamie Stone:**[\[13169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many units of Alford Technologies' Vulcan UXO clearance system his Department has purchased in each of the last ten years.

Jeremy Quin:

The numbers of Vulcan Unexploded Ordnance clearance systems purchased in each of the last ten calendar years from Alford Technologies Limited are provided in the following table:

YEAR	QUANTITY OF SYSTEMS PURCHASED
2011	110
2012	80
2013	108
2014	38
2015	66
2016	0

YEAR	QUANTITY OF SYSTEMS PURCHASED
2017	76
2018	104
2019	0
2020	32
Total	614

■ Armed Forces

Kate Osborne: [\[10679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people are in their last year of service in the TG 317.01.

Leo Docherty:

There are fewer than 20 personnel within their final year of service currently deployed with the Carrier Strike Group, the majority of whom have volunteered to participate in all or part of this exciting and professionally rewarding deployment.

These personnel should not be disadvantaged by their deployment and they will undertake their full resettlement training and transition from active service upon their departure from their respective units.

■ Armed Forces: Counter-terrorism

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[12261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the armed forces have been referred to the UK's terrorism prevention programme.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence does not tolerate extremism of any kind and it is not compatible with the values and standards of our Armed Forces. We continue to be vigilant and are determined to take early action to confront and challenge such behaviours when they occur, including ensuring that referrals are made to the appropriate authorities.

Referrals to PREVENT from across the Armed Forces, since 2019 from when referrals have been recorded, are set out in the table below:

YEAR	REFERRALS
2019	14
2020	8

YEAR	REFERRALS
2021 (to June)	2
Total	24

■ Armed Forces: Injuries

Kate Osborne:

[\[10678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK service personnel have left without medical discharge despite major injuries in each of the last 10 years.

Leo Docherty:

The table below shows the recorded numbers of UK Armed Forces personnel who suffered a major injury in each Financial Year (FY) from 2011-12 to 2020-21 and who subsequently left their service without medical discharge.

FINANCIAL YEAR	PERSONNEL
2011-12	551
2012-13	442
2013-14	418
2014-15	523
2015-16	422
2016-17	307
2017-18	227
2018-19	181
2019-20	98
2020-21	27

Table Notes:

1. Defence Statistics Health have interpreted 'major' injuries as those having a NOTICAS (notification of casualty) listing of Very Seriously Injured (VSI) or Seriously Injured (SI), a limb amputation or a Health and Safety incident with a 'major' or 'specified' severity.
1. It is possible to recover from a 'major' injury and be retained in service in the same or an alternative role. A subsequent exit may be unrelated to an earlier injury.

1. Ministry of Defence Health and Safety datasets for 'major' or 'specified' injury severity spans a wide range of injuries including fractures (other than to fingers, thumbs and toes), and any loss of consciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia.
1. Due to the potential delay between personnel sustaining a major injury and exiting service, there may be personnel who were injured in recent years who have not yet left service.
1. Amputations data for Financial Year 2020-21 is not yet available and is therefore excluded.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Kenny MacAskil: [12310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armoured fighting vehicles the UK has, by country in which those vehicles are currently located.

Jeremy Quin:

The number of Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) held by the British Army are published annually with the UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formation statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2020/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2020>

AFVs are currently in use across the world, including the UK, Canada, Estonia and Germany. It would be inappropriate to confirm exact numbers and locations for operational and security reasons.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [10189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of the prospective foreign military sales option for the Oshkosh Joint Light Tactical Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

Following the outcome of the Integrated Review, the Army is reviewing its wider vehicle requirements including the way forward for the procurement of MRVP- Package 1, for which the Oshkosh-manufactured Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) as a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) acquisition is the current solution. That consideration will encompass all aspects of the procurement to ensure consistency with the latest strategic direction and evolving marketplace.

■ AWE Burghfield

John Healey: [12943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, by what date he expects the MENSA project to be fully operational.

Jeremy Quin:

The approved delivery date of Project MENSA, the new-build warhead assembly and disassembly facility at AWE Burghfield, is 2023.

■ Bomb Disposal: Seas and Oceans**Jamie Stone:**[\[13170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many underwater munitions disposals his Department has performed in the waters surrounding the UK in each of the last ten years; and what proportion of those disposals involved (a) high order detonations and (b) low order deflagrations.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Navy's Area Diving Groups, part of the Fleet Diving Squadron, are responsible for the disposal of underwater ordnance along the UK coastline, up to 12 nautical miles offshore. In the last ten years they have conducted the following numbers of underwater demolitions involving High Order detonation of munitions at sea. No Low Order detonations were conducted.

YEAR	OPERATIONAL TASKS
2020	4
2019	7
2018	13
2017	18
2016	18
2015	8
2014	5
2013	20
2012	9
2011	5

■ Defence: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[11492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the social value requirement for his Department's procurement contracts is optional for contracts relating to the armed services.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 18 May 2021 to Question 991 to the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (Mr John Healey).

Attachments:

1. Defence Equipment Procurement [UIN 991.docx]

■ **HMS Vanguard: Repairs and Maintenance**

John Healey: [\[12941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the refuelling of HMS Vanguard will be completed.

John Healey: [\[12942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost of refuelling HMS Vanguard.

Jeremy Quin:

I am withholding information regarding the completion date of the refuelling of HMS Vanguard as disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of our Armed Forces. I am also withholding the estimated cost as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

■ **Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review: Lancashire**

Mark Menzies: [\[10336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the impact of the Integrated Review on employment in Lancashire.

Jeremy Quin:

Our spending review settlement will increase our defence budget by over £24 billion over the next four years. This investment will modernise our Armed Forces and support jobs across the UK.

In North West England, the Ministry of Defence spent over £ 2.2 billion with industry and commerce in 2019-20. This includes in our truly world-leading combat air sector, which employs thousands of workers across the UK, including in Lancashire.

Lancashire has long been a key part of our defence industrial footprint, particularly for Combat Air. BAE Systems has a large presence in the area, as well as MBDA through their premises in Lostock, Bolton.

The Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper announced that the UK will invest more than £2 billion into the Future Combat Air System programme over the next four years. This major investment will take us a step closer to realising the benefits of Tempest to our nation's security and prosperity.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[12308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Exercise Falcon Strike 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policy on joint training with the Israeli air force of that air force's recent bombing of the Associated Press office in Gaza.

James Heappey:

Ex Falcon Strike is a joint multinational exercise with participants from the United States working with Italy, Israel and the United Kingdom. Cooperation of this kind helps significantly to prepare our armed forces to tackle threats to the UK.

The UK military does not engage with the Israeli Defence Force in matters relating to public order and internal security activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The UK is a staunch defender of media freedom and proponent that journalists must be able to operate safely. We are concerned by reports that Hamas is again using civilian infrastructure and populations as cover for its military operations. All Israeli military action taken must be necessary, proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Costs

John Healey:

[\[12939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the proposed expansion of the cap on the UK's stockpile of nuclear warheads.

Jeremy Quin:

As announced in the Integrated Review the UK will move to an overall nuclear weapon stockpile of no more than 260 warheads. This is a stockpile ceiling, not a target, and we will remain deliberately ambiguous about the exact number of warheads in our stockpile to avoid simplifying the calculations of potential adversaries, similarly the precise costs associated with the size of the stockpile will be withheld for National Security reasons.

■ Oman: Official Hospitality

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[12312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on hospitality received by the Chief of the Defence Staff in connection with his attendance at the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman on 5-6 January 2019.

James Heappey:

Transparency guidance for Senior Officials from the Cabinet Office states that Hospitality provided by overseas governments should not normally be included in published returns. Consequently, the information is not held centrally and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Oman: Visits Abroad

Kenny MacAskill: [\[12311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his department holds on who the Chief of the Defence Staff held meetings with at the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman from 2 to 5 January 2020.

James Heappey:
Privy Council did not meet in 2020.

■ Trident Missiles

John Healey: [\[12940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned timescale is for the in-service date for the replacement to the Trident Holbrook warhead; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:
The UK's Replacement Warhead is planned to enter service in the 2030's. I am withholding specific information about in-service dates for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Kenny MacAskill: [\[12309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of the activities of British air defence units in Saudi Arabia on the conflict in Yemen.

James Heappey:
This deployment is purely defensive in nature and supports Saudi Arabia to mitigate the aerial threats it faces from different quarters. It is therefore not directly involved in the conflict in Yemen.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Archery: Public Participation**

Jim Shannon: [\[12137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to encourage participation in archery.

Nigel Huddleston:
The latest Sport England Active Lives data shows that 585,100 adults (16+) participated in archery in the last year from Mid-Nov 2019 to Mid-Nov 2020. The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy. That's why we have continued to make sure that people can exercise throughout the national restrictions, and why we have

ensured that grassroots and children's sport is at the front of the queue when easing those restrictions.

On Monday 22 February, the Prime Minister announced a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The government introduced a step approach to the return of outdoor and indoor sport areas across England. Organised outdoor and indoor sport including archery has now resumed.

Since 2017/18 Sport England have made 265 awards to archery projects totalling £8,744,328. The Government has also provided unprecedented support to the sport sector to ensure these facilities are able to open. Sport England are also providing £270 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic, including their £35 million Community Emergency Fund. Beyond elite level sport, £100 million of funding has now been provided to support local authority leisure centre

■ **Choirs: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[12227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the scientific and medical evidence for the decision to restrict indoor amateur choirs to six people.

Caroline Dinenage:

I know that the restrictions on singing are frustrating to large numbers of amateur choirs and performance groups across the country and that many people have made sacrifices in order to drive down infections and protect the NHS over the last year. I can assure you that everyone across the government wants to ease these restrictions as soon as possible.

However, it is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions. We have followed the views of public health experts on singing. We are aware, through the [NERVTAG](#) and [PERFORM studies](#) that singing can increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission through the spread of aerosol droplets. This was backed up by a [consensus statement from SAGE](#), resulting in the [suggested principles of safer singing](#) being published.

We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible.

Paul Blomfield:

[13044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason the revised guidance on amateur choir-singing does not take into consideration the recommendations in the SO695 paper commissioned by Government that choir-singing can be made safer with restrictions including (a) practising in spaces with adequate ventilation and (b) 2m social distancing.

Caroline Dineneage:

I know that the restrictions on singing are frustrating to large numbers of amateur choirs and performance groups across the country and that many people have made sacrifices in order to drive down infections and protect the NHS over the last year. I can assure you that everyone across the government wants to ease these restrictions as soon as possible.

However, it is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions. We have followed the views of public health experts on singing. We are aware, through the [NERVTAG](#) and [PERFORM studies](#) that singing can increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission through the spread of aerosol droplets. This was backed up by a [consensus statement from SAGE](#), resulting in the [suggested principles of safer singing](#) being published.

We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible.

■ **Cultural Heritage: Export Controls**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[11702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many objects of cultural or historical significance have been subject to an export ban since 2016.

Caroline Dineneage:

The number of cultural objects for which a decision on the export licence was deferred are published in the annual report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest. These are available on the website of Arts Council England.

For the years 2016 -17 and 2017-2018, 61 objects were placed under export-deferral.

The figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20 will be published shortly.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[11703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will list the objects of either historical or cultural importance that have been subject to an export ban since 2016.

Caroline Dineneage:

Details of cultural objects for which a decision on the export licence was deferred are published in the annual report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest.

Reports for the years 2016 -17 and 2017-2018 are available on the website of Arts Council England.

The reports for 2018-19 and 2019-20 will be published shortly.

■ Deloitte: Arts

Catherine West: [\[13158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has commissioned Deloitte to produce guidance for the creative sector on visas and work permits for EU member states.

Catherine West: [\[13160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has commissioned Deloitte to produce guidance for the creative sector on visas and work permits for EU member states.

Caroline Dinenage:

This government recognises the importance of the UK's creative and cultural industries, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people.

The British people voted to take back control of our borders and end free movement with the EU in the 2016 referendum. That was a key part of the manifesto on which the Government won the 2019 election and is reflected in the agreement. It was inevitable therefore that there would be changes in the arrangements under which creative workers work in the EU.

UK performers, artists, and musicians are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. As the Secretary of State has said, we have moved at pace and with urgency and have provided much greater clarity about the current position. We are committed to supporting the sectors as they get to grips with the changes to systems and processes. This includes the development of sector specific 'landing pages' for GOV.UK, aimed at the creative sectors, which will allow cultural and creative professionals to easily locate and access guidance that is relevant to them. We are also engaging directly with Member States to ensure their guidance on their visa and work permit requirements is clear and accessible.

Separately, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy commissioned Deloitte to provide enhanced guidance on EU Member State immigration systems for GOV.UK to help businesses navigate the new business travel rules, following the end of the Transition Period. The guidance is deliberately sector-neutral, but it does capture any mention of sector-specific rules that feature on Member State websites. So far, 15 country guides have been published, representing more than three quarters of UK services exports to the EU, Norway and Switzerland by value. The remainder will follow in the coming weeks.

■ Listed Events: Gender

Julie Elliott: [\[12133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to Answer of 7 June 2021 to Question 7173, on Listed Events: Gender, what his timeframe is for

publishing the conclusion of the consultation on Listed Sporting Events that closed on 11 December 2019.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in our response to Question 7173 on 7 June 2021, we will respond to the consultation on adding women's sporting events to the listed events regime, which closed on 11 December 2019, in due course. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on sport, in particular women's sport, and this work has been paused until the situation with Covid-19 stabilises.

■ **Museums and Galleries: Equality**

Janet Daby:

[\[11665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of issuing mandatory diversity quotas for artists whose art is displayed by galleries which receive funding from his Department.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government is clear that it expects the cultural sectors to represent our diverse society in their artistic talent, workforce and audiences. As the national development agency for art and culture, Arts Council England (ACE) has a responsibility to ensure that public money benefits all of the public.

ACE ensures there is diversity in audiences, leaders, producers and creators of arts and culture. Their Inclusivity and Relevance principle sets out how organisations in receipt of public funding, including galleries, can work towards this objective across their workforce and governing bodies, the programmes they present, and the audiences they engage with.

ACE has also developed a set of accessible resources which are available online to support organisations to develop their ambitions of becoming more inclusive, including addressing any barriers faced for example by disabled people and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

■ **Music: Coronavirus**

Catherine West:

[\[13156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department undertook an assessment of the public health benefits of non-professional singing prior to publishing the covid-19 guidance that allows six people to sing together indoors.

Caroline Dinéage:

I know that the restrictions on singing are frustrating to large numbers of amateur choirs and performance groups across the country and that many people have made sacrifices in order to drive down infections and protect the NHS over the last year. I am aware that singing can have great benefits for both physical and mental health. I can assure you that everyone across the government wants to ease these restrictions as soon as possible.

We will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Further detail on step 4 will be set out as soon as possible.

■ Musicians: EU Countries

Janet Daby:

[\[12299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress has been made on the proposed arrangement for musicians to tour in the EU without needing individual visas for each country.

Caroline Dinéage:

Regrettably we do not believe the sector's visa waiver proposal is viable. The Commission would be likely to argue that any EU-wide visa waiver agreement can only be part of a wider package with a binding non-discrimination clause and a reciprocal visa waiver agreement covering all current and future Member States, as they proposed in negotiations. This remains incompatible with our manifesto commitment to take control of our borders.

The UK took an ambitious approach during negotiations that would have ensured that touring artists and their support staff did not need work-permits to perform in the EU. Regrettably, our proposals were rejected by the EU, but our door remains open if the EU wants to reconsider its position.

UK performers, artists, and musicians are of course still able to tour and perform in the EU, and vice versa. As the Secretary of State has said, we have moved at pace and with urgency and have provided much greater clarity about the current position.

We have published guidance on GOV.UK, signposting to official information provided by EU countries about their business travel routes. And through our bilateral discussions with EU Member States, we have established that in at least 17 out of 27 Member States some touring activities are possible without visas or work-permits.

The UK has significantly more generous arrangements for touring professionals than many Member States, and should they be willing to change their rules to more closely align with ours we will have those discussions and encourage them to do so.

■ National Lottery: Licensing

Alex Sobel:

[\[12282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which companies have been shortlisted to operate the third licence for the National Lottery.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The competition for the third National Lottery licence was run by the National Lottery Commission, which was merged with the Gambling Commission in October 2013. The Commission announced the outcome of the competition on 7th August 2007.

The Commission received two strong applications for the third licence, from Camelot Group plc and Sugal & Damani UK Ltd. Both bids met the seven demanding Required Standards outlined by the Commission in the Invitation to Apply (ITA).

Camelot Group plc was selected as the Preferred Bidder and was awarded the third licence to start from February 2009. Camelot Group plc were considered best able to maximise returns to good causes over the term of the Licence. The published 'Statement of Reasons' which discusses the outcome in more detail can be found through the National Archives [website](#).

The Gambling Commission launched the competition for the fourth National Lottery licence on 28 August 2020. The next licence comes into force in August 2023. The Commission's priority is to run a fair and robust competition and, given that the competition is underway, it would not be appropriate to name, or comment on, organisations that are participating in the competition. The preferred applicant for the fourth licence is expected to be announced at the end of the year.

■ Social Media: Hate Crime

Elliot Colburn: [\[11725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 3171 on Social Media: Antisemitism and with reference to the priority harms to be set out in secondary legislation under the planned Online Safety Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021, whether he plans to include in those priority harms (a) anti-Semitic abuse, (b) homophobic abuse, (c) abuse on the grounds of disability and (d) abuse on the grounds of other protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Caroline Dinenage:

We know that groups with protected characteristics or with particular mental or physical health conditions are currently more likely to experience harm and abuse online. We are continuing to work with stakeholders, Parliamentarians and Ofcom to identify specific priority harms and to determine how to formulate these in legislation. The list of primary harms will need to capture online abuse, both where it is legal and where it constitutes a criminal offence.

■ Sports: Gender

Julie Elliott: [\[13056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of mixed gender sports for (a) diversity and inclusion and (b) public health.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in sport and physical activity, including gender inclusivity. Our strategy 'Sporting Future' sets out a clear ambition to increase levels of physical activity, particularly amongst all under-represented groups. We welcome the efforts of the sport sector and use of a variety of methods to achieve this.

We are determined to get more women and girls active including through mixed gender sports. We recognise that Covid-19 has brought new challenges to the way

people are able to engage in physical activity. I am keen that we do all we can to break down the barriers that still exist and I welcome the work of Sport England's This Girl Can campaign which has inspired 3.9 million women to take part since its launch in 2015. Sport England's "Join the Movement" campaign has also provided some great tools to keep everyone active during the lockdown.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

Daisy Cooper:

[\[10667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many site owners who lease their land to telecommunications companies for infrastructure have seen their rents reduced by more than 40 per cent as proposed by the Government's Impact Assessment accompanying the 2017 Electronic Communications Code.

Matt Warman:

The Impact Assessment that accompanied the 2017 reforms did not propose a 40% reduction in rents. The 40% figure estimate referred to in the Impact Assessment was drawn from a report by independent economic analysts (Nordicity). The Impact Assessment made clear the difficulty of predicting the exact amount by which rents would fall, given the fact that the price paid for rights to install digital infrastructure is, in the first instance, a matter for private negotiation between operators and site providers.

Government's aim was to reduce the cost of deployment, including the amounts paid for access to land, overall. We have not completed a formal assessment on average rent reductions since the 2017 reforms came into effect and therefore cannot comment on what the average rent reductions have been.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[10668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the proportion of savings made in rent reductions as a result of the 2017 changes to the Electronic Communications Code that have been reinvested into telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas.

Matt Warman:

There has been no formal assessment of rent reductions received by site providers since the 2017 reforms came into effect. We were clear at the time the 2017 legislation was introduced that the changes would take time to achieve their intended effect, not only because the market would require time to adapt, but also because case law would need to be developed and the new provisions would not be immediately applied to existing agreements.

The government has committed a record £5 billion of funding through Project Gigabit to ensure hard to reach communities in rural areas are not behind and get access to world class broadband infrastructure. This has already started to be deployed and is not waiting for the end of the commercial rollout, building on the half a million rural homes and businesses already given coverage through our support.

In addition the government is investing £1 billion alongside the major mobile operators in the Shared Rural Network programme. This will mean that all four mobile network operators will provide 95 per cent combined coverage across the whole of the UK by the end of 2025, delivering strong 4G coverage irrespective of what network provider people use.

■ Tourism

Mark Menzies: [\[10333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) promote the UK as a tourist destination abroad and (b) attract more foreign visitors to (i) smaller towns and (ii) coastal areas.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are currently working with VisitBritain, VisitEngland and local partners to champion England's diverse tourism offer through the Enjoy Summer Safely campaign. Last year the Government spent £19 million on domestic marketing activity, such as the Enjoy Summer Safely campaign, and much more is planned for this year. The Government will work with VisitBritain to welcome back international visitors as soon as it is safe to do so.

More broadly, the Tourism Recovery Plan will set out a long-term framework for how the Government will work with the sector to build back better from the pandemic and develop a more sustainable, innovative, and data-driven tourism industry, including in coastal areas. The Levelling Up Fund, the 83 Towns Deals and the City and Growth Deals in Scotland and Wales show that the Government is investing in tourism infrastructure across the Union, helping towns and coastal areas further develop their tourism offers.

In recent years, the £45m Discover England Fund has supported the development of multiple internationally marketed tourism products in Lancashire, such as VisitBritain's Gateway Partnership with Manchester Airport.

■ Tourism and Travel: Coronavirus

Andrew Gwynne: [\[12080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing additional sector specific support to the tourism and travel industry.

Nigel Huddleston:

We continue to engage with tourism stakeholders to assess the role of the Government's unprecedented support measures in supporting the sector through this period. Ministerial colleagues in the Department for Transport are doing the same with the travel sector.

In total, over £25bn has been provided during the pandemic to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks. The Government is continuing to support businesses and individuals - including through various

government-backed loans, grants and the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes. A UK-wide VAT cut for the tourism sectors from 20% to 5% is in place until September 2021, and 12.5% for the rest of the financial year.

The Government published the Tourism Recovery Plan on 11th June. Alongside addressing short and medium term challenges, the plan sets out a long-term framework for how the Government will work with the sector to build back better from the pandemic - and develop a more sustainable, innovative, and data-driven tourism industry.

■ UK City of Culture

Mr Richard Holden:

[12330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the (a) timeline and (b) criteria are for the 2025 City of Culture bidding process.

Caroline Dinenage:

All bids for the 2025 UK City of Culture competition will be assessed against the following criteria: eligibility; placemaking; recovery and growth; levelling up; innovation; UK and international collaboration; partnership; legacy; sustainability.

The expression of interest is currently open and closes on July 19. Subsequent key dates include:

- Announcement of the longlist bids in September
- Deadline for the longlist applications in January
- Visits to shortlisted places in spring 2022.

The competition will last for 12 months and we expect to announce the winning city in May 2022. For further details on the competition and bidding process, please visit the GOV.UK website.

■ Young Audiences Content Fund: Regional Planning and Development

Julie Elliott:

[13057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Young Audience Content Fund pilot in contributing to the Government's levelling up agenda.

Julie Elliott:

[13058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to support the work of the Young Audience Content Fund.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The publicly funded Young Audiences Content Fund will be supported into its third year, ensuring young audiences have access to engaging and relevant content that reflects UK society and their own diverse experiences wherever they live in the country.

The success of the Fund is evaluated against the criteria set out at launch, including: quality; innovation; additionality; nations and regions; diversity; new voices; plurality and audience reach. Assessments of the fund are ongoing, but the fund has already published its [year one analysis](#), and will be publishing its year two analysis later this year. Year one analysis is available [here](#).

One of the primary aims of the Fund is to increase the provision of content which is reflective of the cultural identity across the UK nations and regions. Merit is therefore awarded to productions that are representative of the nations and regions, both on and off air. UK indigenous language content is also eligible for funding with a target aspiration of 5% of the awards distributed.

As set out in the Year 1 analysis, 71% of projects awarded production funding in Year 1 were set in recognisable UK locations outside of London and the South East, in every home nation. Furthermore, the majority of production companies that were awarded support were based outside of London and the South East.

The recent Year 3 funding award of £10.7 million is a continued commitment from the government to support the Young Audiences Content Fund and the production of UK originated children's television programming in a challenging financial climate. Year three analysis will be published in due course.

EDUCATION

■ Children and Young People: Disability

Alexander Stafford: [\[12353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans are in place to ensure that disabled children and young people are prioritised in (a) the SEND review and (b) the Independent Review into Children's Social Care.

Alexander Stafford: [\[12354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the (a) SEND system and (b) children's social care system that disabled children access is fit for purpose.

Vicky Ford:

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are central to the cross-government SEND Review. The review plans to consult on measures to improve children and young people's outcomes and to put them and their families at the heart of the SEND system. We see this as a critical first step in delivering a SEND system fit for the future – with high-quality support, delivered affordably, and sustainably for the long term.

The Care Review will look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, and the child's journey into and out of that system. There is clearly a significant overlap between the Care Review and SEND Review, as almost half of the children in need within the children's social care system also have SEND. The Care

Review terms of reference can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952624/terms_of_reference_independent_childrens_social_care_review.pdf. The terms of reference set out the questions and themes that the Care Review will consider. They state that the Care Review will give due regard to the SEND Review, which will consider the main questions relevant to children with SEND.

The SEND system has some excellent practice within it, but we know that too many children and young people are not getting the support that they need to succeed. The department is continuing to invest and support improvements in the short-term, whilst reviewing it to ensure that it can be even better in the long-term.

The government's aim is for all children to be in stable, loving homes that keep them safe, meet their individual needs and provide them with the support, stability and opportunities they require to thrive and achieve positive outcomes. We are undertaking a wide-scale review of children's social care, which is taking a look at the needs, experience and outcomes of the children it supports, and what is needed to make a real difference. In doing so, the review will contribute to ambitious and deliverable reforms, taking into account the sustainability of local services and the effective use of resources.

■ Education: Disability

Alexander Stafford:

[12355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps are Government is taking to ensure that disabled children are included in, and able to access, covid-19 education recovery plans.

Vicky Ford:

We recognise that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education, health and wellbeing, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We are committed to supporting them and their families.

We have consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts to these settings in the 2020 Catch-up Premium, the 2021 Recovery Premium and in funding to deliver summer schools this year.

Special and alternative provision schools will receive additional funding to ensure these settings can provide one-to-one tutoring for their pupils. We will also provide greater flexibility to schools to make it easier for them to take on local tutors or use existing staff to supplement those employed through the existing National Tutoring Programme. We anticipate that this will particularly benefit children and young people with SEND, where tutors familiar to these children can support them to realise the benefits of tuition. Children will further benefit from additional funding to ensure that teachers in schools and early years settings are able to access high quality training and professional development. We know that high quality teaching is the best way to

support all students, including those with SEND. Young people with SEND will also benefit from the 16-19 tuition fund and the opportunity to repeat year 13 if necessary.

■ **Free School Meals: Undocumented Migrants**

Stephen Timms: [\[12057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will publish data on the take-up of free school meals from children from families with No Recourse to Public Funds during the temporary extension period.

Vicky Ford:

We have temporarily extended our eligibility for free school meals during the COVID-19 outbreak to include children of Zambrano carers, families with leave to remain under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, families receiving Section 17 support who also have a no recourse to public funds condition and to families receiving Section 4 support.

The department does not plan to publish data regarding the take-up of free school meals from children from families with no recourse to public funds during the temporary extension.

■ **Higher Education: Fees and Charges**

Zarah Sultana: [\[13232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the UKCISA analysis, Who pays home fees for higher education in England, published on 28 May 2021, if he will clarify the meaning of ordinarily resident in criteria c of the qualification for home fees as a family member of a UK national.

Zarah Sultana: [\[13233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the UKCISA analysis. Who pays home fees for higher education in England, published on 28 May 2021, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing criteria d of the qualifications for home fees for family members of UK nationals.

Michelle Donelan:

Paragraph 1 (2A) of Schedule 1 of the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (as amended) provides that a person is not to be treated as ordinarily resident in a place unless that person lawfully resides in that place. Although not further defined in the Regulations, ‘ordinarily resident’ has been interpreted by the courts as lawful, habitual and normal residence from choice and for a settled purpose throughout the prescribed period, apart from temporary or occasional absences. This means that a person must hold a valid status throughout the period of ordinary residence required when establishing their eligibility to student support.

There are no plans to remove the criteria which requires a person’s residence in the UK and Islands to not have been wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-

time education. Student Finance England will determine on a case-by-case basis whether a person meets this requirement.

■ **Newton Rigg College**

Barry Gardiner:

[\[12936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Cumbria Area Review published in 2017, omitted Newton Rigg from the lists and tables of Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges in the county; and what plans he has for the future of Newton Rigg.

Gillian Keegan:

Newton Rigg Campus is part of Askham Bryan College Corporation, has no separate legal identity and was therefore out of scope of the Cumbria area based review. As the campus is part of Askham Bryan College, they were included in the wave 4; York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull area-based review, which commenced in September 2016. This approach was consistent with the broad principles of area-based reviews in that colleges should be formal members of only one area review steering group.

The Further Education Commissioner and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) carried out a comprehensive analysis of local provision needs for Newton Rigg and the surrounding area in 2020. The core objective of this analysis was to establish if there was a need for college provision within the general vicinity of the Newton Rigg campus. It considered the location of neighbouring further education (FE) colleges in relation to travel-to-learn options and identified that most enrolments could be accommodated at other statutory FE institutions.

In total, 286 16 to 18 year old students were enrolled onto land-based further education courses at Newton Rigg, of which 70 were in residential accommodation. Where gaps in provision were identified, specifically agricultural provision, alternative arrangements for the next academic year have been agreed with Myerscough College, in partnership with Ullswater Community College, to ensure continuity of delivery of this provision in the Penrith area after Newton Rigg closes.

If further evidence of gaps in provision are highlighted as a result of the closure of Newton Rigg in support of local authorities' statutory duty to secure provision in an area, the ESFA will consider requests to fill a gap in provision. Where this cannot be met through negotiation with good existing providers the requirements are put out to tender through open competition.

■ **Newton Rigg College: Askham Bryan College**

Barry Gardiner:

[\[12934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Skills Funding Agency took to ensure that the proposed transfer of Newton Rigg assets to Askham Bryan College in 2011 complied with Cabinet Office guidelines for the disposal of public assets, and specifically the appointment of a manager to supervise the contract.

Gillian Keegan:

Newton Rigg is not a public asset, having previously been acquired by the University of Cumbria from the University of Central Lancashire and then transferred to Askham Bryan College in 2011. The transfer of Newton Rigg was therefore not subject to Cabinet Office guidelines.

However, following the decision by the University of Cumbria in 2010 to cease delivering the provision of further education funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young People's Learning Agency, the SFA led on an open and competitive procurement process, in accordance with Part B of Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006, to secure an alternative provider or providers for the delivery of arts provision in Carlisle and predominately land-based provision at Newton Rigg. As a result of this competition, the funding for students studying further education at the University's Brampton Road building was transferred to Carlisle College, and the funding for students studying further education at Newton Rigg, together with the relevant further education assets owned by the University of Cumbria at Newton Rigg, were transferred to Askham Bryan College. The procurement was subject to a review by Cabinet Office in 2011 and its findings are available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61795/MYSTERY-SHOPPER-CASE-PUBLICATION-JULY-2012.pdf.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency and its predecessor organisations assign individual case managers to each further education provider who hold funding agreements and contracts to deliver publicly funded education and training. Case managers are then responsible for managing the relationship between government and individual further education providers.

■ Nurseries: Yorkshire and the Humber**Rachael Maskell:****[12198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many nurseries have closed (a) nationally, (b) in Yorkshire and (c) in York since March 2020.

Vicky Ford:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus**Peter Kyle:****[13147]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many covid-19 lateral flow tests have been (a) distributed to schools for pupil use and (b) formally completed by pupils since March 2021.

Peter Kyle:

[13148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the proportion of pupils regularly being tested for covid-19 within schools.

Nick Gibb:

The number of COVID-19 lateral flow tests that have been distributed to schools and further education colleges since 1 March 2021 is 192,931,671, of which 135,452,570 are for pupils. This includes 126,705,245 COVID-19 lateral flow self-test kits for testing at home.

The number of lateral flow tests that have been completed by pupils in secondary schools, excluding colleges, between 4 March and 2 June is 21.9 million.

The number of lateral flow tests that have been completed in total since 4 March and up to 2 June for all education settings, including higher education, is 47.7 million. This includes testing of pupils, staff, school household bubble testing, and school support bubble testing. Testing figures have been derived from the Department of Health and Social Care NHS Test and Trace published statistics which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/weekly-statistics-for-nhs-test-and-trace-england-27-may-to-2-june-2021>.

■ Regional Schools Commissioners

Peter Kyle:

[10521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) potential challenges faced by regional schools commissioners.

Nick Gibb:

Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) act on behalf of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, in relation to academies, free schools and school improvement, and are accountable to the National Schools Commissioner. Each RSC is supported by a head teacher board. Head teacher boards are made up of experienced academy head teachers and other sector leaders.

RSCs also play an important role in the Department's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, by leading our Regional Education and Children's Teams to better co-ordinate how the Department captures information and intelligence about local needs and circumstances in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

RSC performance is managed through the normal and existing civil service arrangements for Senior Civil Servants. In addition, the Department publishes annual reports relating to school and academies performance, of which the work of RSCs is included. These can be found here: Annual Report and Accounts <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfe-annual-reports>, and Academies Sector Report and Accounts

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm>

[ent_data/file/968362/SARA_Academies_Sector_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_201819 - accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/968362/SARA_Academies_Sector_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_201819_-_accessible.pdf).

Over the coming months, areas of focus for the RSCs will be:

- Supporting the school system to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak
- Supporting underperforming schools to move into strong families of schools.
- Supporting growth, development, and improvement of Academy Trusts.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[10669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of requiring students to wear face coverings in schools following the increase in cases of the covid-19 variant originating in India.

Nick Gibb:

When a variant of COVID-19 is classed as a variant of concern, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) will increase targeted testing in that area to help suppress and control any possible new cases and better understand the new variants.

The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff, may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. In all cases, any educational drawbacks should be balanced with the benefits of managing transmission.

In Enhanced Response Areas, Directors of Public Health have discretion to recommend supervised in-school testing, or that secondary schools reintroduce face coverings in indoor communal areas including classrooms, subject to an assessment of the educational impact against public health benefit.

The Strengthened Support Packages are now the process for escalating any education-based interventions. NHS Test and Trace has set up Regional Partnership Teams (RPTs) made up of Public Health England (PHE) Regional Directors; Contain Regional Convenors; and Joint Biosecurity Centre Regional Leads to support local areas in managing outbreaks. Local Authorities or Directors of Public Health who are concerned about the impact of variants of concern on nurseries, schools and colleges should first and foremost engage with their RPTs. We continue to work closely with other government departments throughout the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including PHE and DHSC, as well as stakeholders across the sector.

Our policy on the system of controls is kept under review and based on the latest scientific and medical advice including in the context of prevalence, new variants and progress of the vaccination programme. We will continue to develop comprehensive guidance and to understand the impact and effectiveness of these measures on staff, pupils, students and parents.

■ Schools: Finance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[10690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessments he has made of the potential merits of spending £50 per pupil per year to help school children catch up with the curriculum following the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to supporting all children and young people to catch up after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The £1.4 billion package announced in June 2021 to support children aged 2-19 across nurseries, schools and colleges is the next step and builds on the £1.7 billion already committed. This brings the total investment announced for education recovery over the past year to over £3 billion.

The £50 per pupil figure does not account for our previous recovery packages or for our broader response to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as investing over £400 million to provide access to the internet, and over 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

The next stage of the Government's long-term education recovery plan will include a review of time spent in school and college and the impact this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the review will be set out later in the year to inform the spending review.

In addition, as part of the three-year increase to core funding, schools have received a £2.6 billion increase in funding in the 2020/21 financial year and will receive a further £4.8 billion increase in 2021/22, compared to 2019/20.

■ Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Finance

Luke Pollard:

[\[10631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has received representations on the adequacy of funding for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has received a copy of a report produced by the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE). The report presents a summary of responses received from local authorities to Freedom of Information requests relating to funding of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs).

Local authorities are allocated funding through the central school services block (CSSB) for a range of duties that they must meet for all pupils in maintained schools and academies, such as establishing and maintaining a SACRE. In financial year 2021/22, the total funding for ongoing responsibilities in the CSSB is £257 million, a 3.8% increase compared to 2020/21, to keep up with inflation and pupil numbers.

The Department does not specify what proportion of this money should be attributed to different services or duties. It is up to each local authority to decide this for itself. We expect that a SACRE should be sufficiently resourced to meet its statutory duties. If a SACRE is unable to do this, it should first raise a complaint locally about the issue. If it has done this unsuccessfully, the issue can be escalated to the Department's School Complaints Unit.

■ Training: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon: **[13036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that models for apprenticeships, traineeships and other skills programmes (a) take into account changes in workplaces as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, and (b) are fit for future purpose in the context of that matter.

Gillian Keegan:

It is important that our programmes provide the skills individuals and employers need now, and in the future, and that these are adaptable and responsive to emerging skills needs, and ways of working.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak we have responded quickly and flexibly, providing support and guidance for employers and apprentices, and we are committed to supporting a smooth transition as restrictions lift and apprentices return to work and training. Guidance for apprentices, employers, and training providers on this can be found here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19/recent-announcements/apprentices-returning-to-work-and-training/>.

We support employers who may wish to retain some of the agile and flexible training practices developed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, where these deliver a good experience for apprentices and give them every opportunity to achieve their apprenticeship. For example, Ofsted identified ways in which further education and skills providers had adapted their provision to include further online and remote learning opportunities. More information can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933434/FES_COVID-19_briefing_October_2020.pdf.

Apprenticeships play an invaluable role in supporting people of all ages to start and progress in their careers and we are working closely with employers and providers to support them to train apprentices in the ways that best meet their needs. We are encouraging greater use of innovative apprenticeship training models, such as the 'front-loading' of off-the-job training, with tailored support now on offer to the construction and health and social care sectors. We are also developing accelerated apprenticeships so that apprentices with substantial prior learning, such as T Level graduates, can complete an apprenticeship more quickly.

In July, we are launching a £7 million fund to support more apprentices through the flexi job apprenticeship scheme. This will support employers and apprentices in sectors with more flexible employment models, like the creative industries, to make

greater use of apprenticeships. We are also developing portable apprenticeships to further enable apprentices and employers to make use of apprenticeships in those sectors where short-term, project-based employment is the norm.

Since September 2020 we have been working with employers to develop new occupational traineeships which will provide young people with a tailored springboard into their industries. In May we introduced the first ever occupational traineeship in rail engineering with further occupational traineeships opportunities in the adult care, construction, digital, logistics and automotive sectors to follow in the summer. These traineeships will be aligned to apprenticeship standards and will significantly increase the opportunities for young people to progress into apprenticeships or other employment.

T Level students should have the opportunity to experience a real workplace setting during their industry placement, to help them develop their skills and receive the nurturing, mentoring and support needed to succeed. We have put in place additional funding and support for education providers and employers, including a new T Level employer incentive scheme, where employers will be eligible to claim a £1,000 payment for hosting a T Level industry placement, recognising the impact that COVID-19 is having on businesses.

We have also put in place specific measures to ensure that the first cohort of T Level students can complete their industry placement successfully, again in recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. These include a temporary flexibility for the education and childcare industry placement hours requirement and alternative arrangements for summer assessments that will allow students to focus on their industry placement and the occupational specialism in the second year of their course. We are monitoring the situation closely and offering providers one to one support as needed.

■ Work Experience

James Grundy: [\[10703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has been made of the effect of the increase in students undertaking unpaid work placement years.

James Grundy: [\[10704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Department is taking to support students experiencing financial difficulty who wish to undertake an unpaid placement year at university.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises that this academic year has been incredibly difficult for students. As a result of these exceptional circumstances, some students are facing financial hardship. Students experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 or for other reasons should contact their higher education (HE) provider.

We have made an additional £85 million of student hardship funding available to HE providers in the 2020/21 academic year. Providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to their students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need.

This is in addition to the £256 million of government-funded student premium funding already available to HE providers to draw on towards student hardship funds for the 2020/21 academic year.

We know that not all students will face financial hardship. The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need and the government continues to monitor the situation to look at what impact this funding is having.

Undergraduate students undertaking work placement years with private employers receive a reduced-rate non-means tested loan for living costs from Student Finance England, on the expectation that the private employer who benefits from the student's work should provide support for the student rather than the taxpayer.

The government, however, makes an exception for many work placements in the public sector by making available the full-rate partially means-tested loan for living costs package to encourage students to gain work experience in these areas. This ensures that low-income students undertaking working placements in the public sector receive targeted support through the student support system.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Common Land

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that farmers on common land can benefit from the (a) Sustainable Farming Incentive and (b) Environmental Land Management schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

To support the development of the environmental land management schemes, we are working with a number of stakeholders to help us understand how the building blocks of the future schemes could work in practice on common land. One of our key mechanisms for working with farmers and land managers is through our 78 tests and trials which cover a range of different geographies, sectors and farm types. We have three tests and trials focused on commons and the results of these tests and trials are feeding into the development of the Sustainable Farming Incentive and other environmental land management schemes.

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of lost revenue from reductions in Basic

Payments Scheme payments that farmers will be able to recoup through the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

We will soon be announcing the initial standards that we will be offering to farmers in the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme for 2022. The scheme will expand over time and evolve to deliver continued progress against our climate and environmental priorities and reflect any changes to the regulatory baseline.

The scheme will give farmers an opportunity to secure a complementary income stream to their farm business by undertaking sustainable farming actions that benefit the wider environment.

It will be up to individual farmers to decide which standards they take up on their farm and how much of their land they decide to put into the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, alongside other agri-environment schemes that such as Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of farms under five hectares not receiving basic payments that are expected to benefit from the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Environmental Land Management schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

When the Sustainable Farming Incentive begins in 2022 it will be open to Basic Payment Scheme recipients only, but, subject to what we learn from piloting the Sustainable Farming Incentive, as the scheme expands we intend to open eligibility so that in 2024 it is open to all farmers. Our aim is to make it attractive and straightforward for everyone to take part, including the many farmers who are not currently in an agri-environment scheme.

We only monitor commercial farms,^[1] which account for 98% of total agricultural activity. At this stage it is not possible to estimate how many farms with less than 5 hectares will benefit from the environmental land management schemes.

[1] Commercial farms are those with significant levels of farming activity. These significant levels are classified as any holding with more than 5 hectares of agricultural land, 1 hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of UK farms received Basic Payment Scheme in each of the last five years.

Victoria Prentis:

Unfortunately we cannot provide accurate estimates of the proportion of the whole farming population in England claiming Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Estimates of the entire farming population are collected using criteria which do not correspond to those governing how BPS claimants are classified, and therefore no direct comparison can be made.

Over the last five years (2016-2020) the following numbers of farms/businesses in England received a payment from the BPS:

2016 - 85,837

2017 - 85,127

2018 - 84,020

2019 - 83,947

2020 - 83,852

BPS is a devolved matter and the information provided relates to England only and is for registered farms/businesses.

■ Animal Products: Trade**Luke Pollard:**[\[10632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Departments consultation on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies, which closed on 25 February 2021, what plans he has to include the trophies of (a) lions, (b) tigers, (c) cheetahs and (d) other big cats bred in captivity in a future ban on import and export of those trophies.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the conservation of endangered species very seriously, which is why we are banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species, as set out in the Government's manifesto.

The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the publication of the Government response to the consultation and call for evidence. However, our approach will be comprehensive, robust and effective and will deliver the change we promised to help protect thousands of species worldwide.

■ Babies: Consumer Goods**Helen Hayes:**[\[13149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the data being collated with reference to the age at which children potty train that is informing his Department's new life cycle assessment of disposable and washable absorbent hygiene products.

Helen Hayes:

[13150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department is using the most up to date data available to inform its new life cycle assessment of disposable and washable absorbent hygiene products.

Helen Hayes:

[13151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish its new life cycle assessment of disposable and washable hygiene products.

Rebecca Pow:

The environmental assessment of disposable and reusable absorbent hygiene products is being undertaken by independent analysts. They have taken into consideration information including a recent survey using YouGov Parents Omnibus to establish current ages for potty training, and are using the most recent and best available international lifecycle inventory databases and secondary data in the public domain, supported by primary data provided by industry where this has been forthcoming. The analysts are in the final stages of completing the work which will be published later this year, following peer review. The sources of the information used will be included in the final report.

■ **Compost: Peat**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[10580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has (a) made an assessment of the potential merits of and (b) had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on introducing a tax or levy on peat based composts in order to incentivise the use of peat free alternatives.

Rebecca Pow:

In the recently published England Peat Action Plan we have committed to undertake a full consultation in 2021 on banning the sale of peat and peat containing products in the amateur sector by the end of this Parliament. The consultation will also examine other measures, including the feasibility of introducing a point-of-sale charge for the purchase of growing media containing peat (this could use the plastic bag charge as a model).

As outlined in the Action Plan, we are committed to working with the industry to understand the implications of our proposals, identify blockages and to working with the private sector to develop and enact solutions, thus making the transition to peat alternatives as seamless as possible.

The England Peat Action Plan can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987859/england-peat-action-plan.pdf

Attachments:

1. England Peat Action Plan [england-peat-action-plan.pdf]

■ Dangerous Dogs: Livestock

Jake Berry:

[R] [\[10361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle dog attacks on livestock.

Victoria Prentis:

New measures to crack down on livestock worrying are to be introduced in England and Wales through the Kept Animals Bill introduced to Parliament on 8 June.

We will enhance enforcement mechanisms available to the police and expand the scope of livestock species and locations covered by the law. Improved powers will enable the police to respond to livestock worrying incidents more effectively – making it easier for them to collect evidence and, in the most serious cases, seize and detain dogs to reduce the risk of further incidents.

The scope of livestock species covered by the legislation will be extended to include animals such as llamas, emus, enclosed deer and donkeys. New locations will include roads and paths, as long as the livestock have not strayed into a road.

■ Farmers: Finance

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential financial effect for farmers of the replacement of the Basic Payment Scheme with the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Environmental Land Management schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

We will soon be announcing the initial standards that we will be offering to farmers in the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme for 2022. The scheme will expand over time and evolve to deliver continued progress against our climate and environmental priorities, while encouraging sustainable food production and reflect any changes to the regulatory baseline.

The scheme will give farmers an opportunity to secure a complementary income stream to their farm business by undertaking sustainable farming actions that benefit the wider environment.

It will be up to individual farmers to decide which standards they take up on their farm and how much of their land they decide to put into the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, alongside other agri-environment schemes that such as Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship.

The Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery schemes which farmers and landowner will also be able to take part in will be piloted in 2022, in advance of launch in 2024.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[10197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support family farmers in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Through our reforms to English agricultural policy we will move away from area-based subsidy. This means that farmers will receive money based on the outcomes they provide, not just on the amount of land they own and manage. Family farms of all sizes will therefore have opportunities to enhance their business and the natural environment.

We are starting these changes this year. We are making increasing amounts of funding available to farmers so that they have the opportunities to apply for Countryside Stewardship scheme agreements, extending existing Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship agreements, introducing our Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot, and helping farmers to invest in equipment, technology and infrastructure to improve their productivity and business prosperity. Over time we will make more funding available for farmers to undertake environmental land management.

To support these changes and to give farmers the best chance of benefiting from our reforms we will be providing support to build resilience during the early years of the transition. This support will help farmers by providing the information and tools required to plan with confidence on the best way forward for their business.

■ Farmers: Recruitment

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking in addition to the Basic Payment Scheme lump sum exit scheme to encourage new entrants to the farming sector.

Victoria Prentis:

As set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan this Government will provide funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure, and support to establish successful and innovative businesses.

We are currently engaging a wide range of stakeholders on key issues in the design of the scheme. We will report more detail of the scheme in Autumn of 2021 and aim to launch the scheme in 2022.

In addition, the Government is contributing towards the establishment of The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture that will help make farming a more attractive industry to new entrants. It will provide a skills framework for continuing professional development creating clear career pathways and promoting the sector as a progressive career choice to those wishing to enter the industry.

■ Fisheries: Finance

Luke Pollard:

[\[10637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement on EU negotiations: 24 December 2020, to whom the £100 million funding for the British fishing fleet has been allocated.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has announced that £100 million will be made available across the UK for the best transformative seafood projects that will rejuvenate the industry and our coastal communities.

Options for the funding are currently being explored, but key areas for investment are likely to be infrastructure projects that support the development and modernisation of ports, harbours, and landing sites across the UK; the development and roll out of science and innovation across the catching and processing sectors; and the training required to ensure the workforce has the right skills, capacity, and expertise, alongside initiatives to encourage new entrants into the sector. More detail on this funding will be made available in due course.

■ Fisheries: Government Assistance

Luke Pollard:

[\[10639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support fishers who are experiencing losses over the (a) short, (b) medium and (c) longer term.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the seafood sector receives the support it needs to build resilience, recover from the pandemic and adapt to new trading conditions as an independent coastal state. This is why we have announced a range of support to the sector aimed at addressing short, medium, and long-term funding needs. The funding package of up to £23 million, which earlier this year was used to deliver temporary support schemes to seafood businesses affected by Covid-19 and new trading conditions, demonstrates the Government's ability to act decisively and address short-term funding needs where necessary.

£32.7 million has been made available to support the seafood sector this financial year. This meets the Government's manifesto commitment to maintain funding for the sector and enables each of the four administrations of the UK to deliver their own domestic funding schemes. The new domestic funding scheme in England, the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme will support the long-term sustainable growth of the seafood sector and initially focuses on helping businesses adapt to new conditions and opportunities arising from leaving the EU and supporting their on-going recovery from the impacts of Covid-19.

The Prime Minister has announced that an additional £100 million will be made available across the UK for transformative seafood projects that will rejuvenate the

industry and our coastal communities. It will be used to invest in: modernising and expanding infrastructure; the science and data needed to ensure a sustainable sector; and the training required to ensure the workforce has the capacity, skills and expertise required for a thriving and prosperous industry. More detail on this funding will be made available in due course.

■ Fisheries: Quotas

Luke Pollard: [\[10635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to make it his policy that fishing quota swaps will continue to be available between producer organisations.

Luke Pollard: [\[10638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of restarting international quota swaps between producer organisations, in addition to providing direct financial support, on the British fishing fleet.

Victoria Prentis:

Exchanges of quota within the UK are available as normal.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides for exchanges of quota both at annual negotiations and in-year via a mechanism developed by the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The UK and EU have also agreed to establish transfers on an interim basis before the in-year mechanism is developed.

No recent assessment has been made in relation to the effect of introducing an international quota exchange mechanism between the UK and EU.

■ Flood Control: Standards

Andrew Rosindell: [\[10198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve flood defences in Britain.

Rebecca Pow:

Between 2015 and 2021 the Government invested £2.6bn to better protect around 314,000 homes from flooding. In July 2020, Defra published its floods Policy Statement, setting out the Government's long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. At the Budget in 2020, the Government announced that it will invest £5.2 billion in a six-year capital investment programme for flood and coastal erosion risk management to build over 2,000 new flood defences. This investment will better protect 336,000 properties, including 290,000 homes, from flooding and coastal erosion by 2027.

In addition, up to £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction before the end of 2021/2022,

which will provide an immediate boost to jobs supporting local economies as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus.

A further £200 million will be invested in the Innovative Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This will help over 25 local areas over six years to take forward wider innovative actions that improve their resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

■ Food Supply: Finance

Luke Pollard: [\[10634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on providing guidance to local authorities on the allocation to wholesale food distributors of funding under the Rating (Coronavirus) and Directors Disqualification (Dissolved Companies) Bill.

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has had no recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding guidance to local authorities on the allocation of funding to wholesale food distributors.

The Government will ensure that local authorities have the guidance they need to deliver the additional £1.5 billion business rates support package once primary legislation is passed, in line with the announcement on 25 March. As with other business rates reliefs, officials will work closely with local government on the development of the relief scheme and guidance for local authorities will be published in due course.

■ Food Supply: Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade

Luke Pollard: [\[10633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential effect of the reported shortfall in available freight delivery drivers on the (a) supply and (b) cost of supply of food to the (i) hospitality and (ii) convenience retail sectors.

Victoria Prentis:

My Rt Hon Friend the Environment Secretary has discussed with the Secretary of State for Transport the logistical challenges for the food industry caused by a shortfall of lorry drivers. These discussions focused on a potential time-limited exemption from the points-based immigration system to enable UK employers to continue to recruit EU/EEA Heavy Goods Vehicles drivers.

Officials from the two departments continue to meet regularly to discuss the issue of driver shortfalls and the potential impact on the UK food supply chain. Intelligence from the industry, gathered from ongoing engagement with the sectors of the food

chain, forms part of these discussions. Some acute problems have been identified, particularly in wholesale distribution.

Solutions that are being discussed include: extending driver delivery hours; the Department for Transport's Large Goods Vehicles apprenticeship scheme; the Department for Work and Pensions' action to encourage more job seekers into the profession; and increased Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency testing capacity.

■ Hops: Finance

Stephen Morgan:

[\[10612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to incentivise and support investment in the UK's hop sector; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a proud hop-growing tradition, with the climate, soils and the entrepreneurial farmers and growers that enable us to produce the highest quality hops, with a wide selection of traditional and new varieties. We want to encourage a thriving and competitive farming sector where all farms, including those growing hops, can be profitable and economically sustainable. There is a huge opportunity for UK agriculture to improve its competitiveness – developing the next generation of food and farming technology, adopting the latest techniques and investing in skills and equipment.

From autumn 2021, we will open the new Farming Investment Fund which will provide grants to farmers, foresters and growers (including contractors to these sectors) so that they can invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will improve their productivity and deliver environmental and other public benefits. This will help businesses to prosper while enhancing the environment. We are also working closely with the British Hops Association on mitigating the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the industry.

■ Hops: UK Trade with EU

Robert Halfon:

[\[13033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the UK leaving the EU on hop merchants in the UK.

Robert Halfon:

[\[13034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support hop merchants since the end of the transition period.

Robert Halfon:

[\[13035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the EU legislation imposed on hop merchants regarding the re-export of third country hops.

Victoria Prentis:

Having left the EU, hops and hop products exported from GB to the EU now require an accompanying Attestation of Equivalence issued by an agency authorised and listed in Annex I of EC Regulation 1295/2008. Defra worked hard to ensure that the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) were listed in that regulation from 1 January 2021. We were successful in that listing. This means hops and hop products grown and processed in GB can continue to be exported to the EU so long as they are accompanied by an Attestation of Equivalence issued by the RPA.

EU Regulations require that the RPA can only issue Attestations of Equivalence for hops and hop products that were grown, or had their final processing, in GB. For now, the RPA are not able to issue an Attestation of Equivalence for hops or hop products imported from EU or the rest of the world which have not undergone any further processing.

Defra appreciate the concern that the inability to re-export third country hops and hop products to the EU is causing for hop merchants. Defra has raised the issue with the European Commission. We will inform stakeholders at the earliest opportunity if the position changes.

■ Inland Waterways: Environment Protection**Marsha De Cordova:****[10627]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Environmental Agency in enabling the Government to meet its commitments to making the UK's rivers, lakes and streams healthy by 2027.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency [corporate scorecard](#) shows a high-level overview of its performance against environmental and business aims and is used to update senior leaders on the Environment Agency's progress every three months.

My Rt Hon Friend the Environment Secretary regularly keeps the Environment Agency's progress under review on how well it is achieving stated aims as set out in the [Environment Agency Action plan](#).

Delivering a healthy water environment is a task that goes beyond the scope of any single organisation's capability. The Environment Agency is the body that is responsible for developing plans to achieve the objective of a healthy water environment in England. However, a far wider range of organisations must participate if it is to succeed. The Environment Agency will consult over the draft plans covering the period until 2027 this year and I encourage all interested parties to engage with that process.

■ Ivory

Luke Pollard:

[10641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's consultation on Implementing the Ivory Act, which closed on 4 May 2021, if he will take steps to help ensure that members of the public can securely donate or surrender items of ivory that they own.

Rebecca Pow:

The Ivory Act will not affect the ownership of ivory items and as such we have no plans for a government surrender scheme at this time. We recognise that, for some low value items, owners may decide it is not cost-effective to register them for sale. This will be a decision for individual owners. Such items may of course be gifted, donated or bequeathed rather than discarded. We will explain to owners what options are available to them as part of our awareness raising campaign.

■ Ivory Act 2018

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[10154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department is having with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the implementation of the Ivory Act 2018 and ensuring technology companies work with enforcement officers to prevent the illegal trade of ivory products.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has not discussed the role of technology companies with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Contractors have had early discussions about the role of online sales platforms. We will work with a range of interested parties and stake holders to ensure the ban on dealing in elephant ivory is enforced effectively.

■ Ivory: Government Departments

Luke Pollard:

[10640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of ivory items (a) owned and (b) collated in (i) Government Departments and (ii) other Government owned or managed institutions.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has not made any estimates of the number of ivory items owned by, or collated in, Government departments, or institutions owned or managed by the Government.

■ Local Government: Waste Disposal

Steve Reed:

[\[12148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of local authorities that have provided weekly bin collections in (a) 2010, (b) 2015 and (c) 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

According to data from the Waste and Resources Action Programme, the number of local authorities providing a weekly residual waste collection was (a) 202 in 2009/10, (b) 172 in 2014/15 and (c) 147 in 2019/20. In the data set, some local authorities may appear in more than one frequency category as they may operate several different schemes across their area. There are also a small number of local authorities who provide a residual waste collection more frequently than weekly.

The frequency of waste collections is for local authorities to determine. The Government supports comprehensive and frequent rubbish and recycling services and is developing proposals on consistent recycling collections, including requiring weekly food waste collections from all households in England.

■ Microplastics: Regulation

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[10686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on bringing forward legislative proposals to ban microplastics; and if he will launch a review into the environmental impact of floral foam.

Rebecca Pow:

In general, we prefer to help people and companies make the right choice, rather than banning items outright. There may, however, be times when a ban is appropriate as part of a wider strategic approach. To tackle microplastics we have already introduced one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products. This will help to stop billions of these tiny plastic pieces from entering the ocean and being eaten by marine wildlife. The Government does not currently have plans to launch a review into the environmental impact of floral foam. However, we will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products.

The Government has set out the first restrictions to be initiated under its new chemical regulation system, UK REACH, to tackle risks posed by chemicals. The launch of the UK REACH programme includes plans to initiate the restriction process on lead ammunition and certain harmful substances in tattoo inks and permanent make-up. We are keeping other issues that we did not initiate in the restriction process for this year under review. This includes scoping what further action could be taken to address intentionally added microplastics based on the best available evidence.

To tackle plastic pellet loss we support Operation Clean Sweep, an initiative led by industry through the British Plastics Federation, to address incidents of plastic pellet loss. This initiative addresses this problem at all stages of the supply chain. At the British-Irish Council Marine Litter Symposium in 2019, Ministers recognised the need to address plastic pellets and considerable progress has been made in developing solutions to reduce plastic pellet loss. The administrations have supported the development of a Publicly Available Specification developed by the British Standards Institution, which sets out how any business handling or managing pellets can reduce pellet loss. This is the first of its kind and will be published in July this year. All administrations will promote it through their networks.

■ **National Wildlife Crime Unit: Finance**

Hilary Benn:

[\[12944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the future funding arrangements will be for the National Wildlife Crime Unit; and whether that funding will be for 12 months or on a longer term basis.

Rebecca Pow:

Since 2016, Defra and the Home Office have committed £300,000 a year to fund the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCUC). This contribution has been continued into the financial year 2021/22. The NWCUC's other funding partners, the Scottish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the National Police Chiefs Council, have similarly undertaken to maintain their contributions through 2021/22. Decisions on the government's future funding of the NWCUC will be taken as part of the next Spending Review.

■ **Plants: EU countries**

Paul Maynard:

[\[13005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to reduce the regulatory burden of plant inspections on the import of ornamental horticulture products from the EU.

Robert Halfon:

[\[13032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that have been adversely affected by new trade requirements for plants, plant products and hops.

Victoria Prentis:

Since the end of the transition period, Great Britain (GB) has operated its own sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime, which is focused on addressing the risks it faces. This regime includes risk-based import checks of plants, plant products and other objects to avoid the introduction of harmful plant pests and diseases. These risk-based checks are in line with WTO/SPS principles and consistent with our obligations under the EU Withdrawal Act.

The UK Government took the decision to introduce SPS checks in phases, in order to protect GB biosecurity whilst also maintaining the efficient trade in goods such as plants and plant products. Therefore, checks of high-priority plants and plant products have been introduced first, from 1 January 2021, since they pose the greatest potential risk to GB biosecurity. The final phase of controls will come in from March 2022. Phasing in import controls over 15 months allows businesses time to adapt to the new requirements.

Defra also took the decision to delay the introduction of fees for import checks of high-priority plants from the EU for 5 months to give businesses more time to prepare and adjust to the new charging arrangements. During this time, Defra has communicated extensively with industry and stakeholder groups to ensure they are prepared for the new fees coming in.

On hops, Defra appreciates the concern that the inability to re-export third country hops and hop products to the EU is causing for hop merchants. Defra has raised the issue with the European Commission. We will inform stakeholders at the earliest opportunity if the position changes.

■ **Poultry: Animal Welfare**

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[10517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether chicks are killed by maceration in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

All four of the main laying hen hatcheries in the UK use argon and CO₂ gas mixtures as a permitted method of killing male day-old chicks, rather than maceration.

Maceration, or immediate crushing of the entire animal, is a lawful method of killing chicks up to 72 hours old and egg embryos (under Annex I of Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing). The method must provide for instantaneous maceration and immediate death of the animals and, as a result, they are caused no avoidable pain, distress or suffering when killed.

It is not within the Food Standards Agency's remit to inspect laying hen hatcheries.

There is no statutory requirement to keep records of chicks killed by maceration.

■ **Rights of Way: Portsmouth**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[10610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that Portsmouth City Council bring forward an Order for a restricted Byway at the Camber.

Rebecca Pow:

Public rights of way are a local issue and this matter is the responsibility of the local County Council. We are unable to comment on specific cases, to avoid prejudice

should they come before a Government Minister or Planning Inspector for a decision. I can, however, offer some general advice which I hope you will find helpful.

Public rights of way exist in four categories: footpaths for use on foot (or with mobility scooters); bridleways for use on horseback or bicycle as well as on foot; restricted byways for use of carriages in addition to the above; and byways open to all traffic for use of motor vehicles in addition to the other types.

A public right of way is added to the network by either proving the way existed through historic evidence or proving the public has used the route for 20 years. The use needs to be at the appropriate level. For example, a bridleway would not be added if there is no evidence it has been used by horses or bicycles. Whether the route is amenable to local residents is not considered at this stage as it is an evidence-based process only.

Once a route is recognised as part of the network, a public path order may be made to change the status of the route by agreement with the local authority. Here convenience, safety and other such concerns are taken into consideration. In both instances, the public has the right to object to the proposed changes to the network and the local authority advertises the changes in order to give residents the opportunity to give their views.

The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) administers rights of way cases on behalf of Defra. They deal with cases where the decision has been challenged.

■ **Sharks: Overseas Trade**

Dave Doogan:

[\[13224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government's legislative proposals to ban the import and export of shark fins will include a ban on the import and export of shark fin products.

Victoria Prentis:

As set out in the recently published Action Plan for Animal Welfare we will be bringing in legislation to ban the import and export of detached shark fins.

We are making good progress with developing this legislation including consideration of the scope needed to ensure our measures are as effective as possible at delivering shark conservation benefits globally. These measures will demonstrate our continuing leadership on shark conservation issues and signal our strong opposition to any ongoing finning practices.

■ **Waste Disposal**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to encourage the expansion of refill stations in supermarkets to reduce the generation of non-recyclable waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042.

Industry is already taking action. The UK Plastics Pact jointly founded by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Ellen McArthur Foundation is supported by the Government. The Pact brings together organisations from across the plastics supply chain, including all the major supermarkets, with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. Current Pact business members are responsible for 80% of plastic packaging sold through UK supermarkets.

Through the Pact, work has been done to increase the sale of unpackaged products. The WRAP Fresh Produce Guidance was published in November 2019 which includes advice for retailers to help determine if fresh produce can be provided loose. In June 2019, Waitrose & Partners unveiled a new trial, 'Waitrose Unpacked', to explore alternative ways of shopping. It included a dedicated refillable zone, the UK's first supermarket frozen 'pick and mix' station, and the first borrow-a-box scheme are among a series of ideas being looked at in a unique test in order in order to potentially save thousands of tonnes of unnecessary plastic and packaging. Since its initial introduction in their Botley Road branch in Oxford this initiative has been extended to three other stores in Wallingford, Abingdon, and Cheltenham and they continue to extend the range of products available unpacked.

Alongside supporting voluntary action by industry, the Government is taking regulatory action to reduce the use of non-recyclable waste. For instance, the single-use carrier bag charge, which has led to a 95% reduction in the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarkets, was increased to 10p and extended to all retailers on 21 May 2021. This will further encourage customers to bring their own bags to carry shopping and reduce the volumes of single-use plastic being used.

The Government is also reforming the packaging producer responsibility regulations and developing extended producer responsibility for packaging. Extended producer responsibility for packaging will see packaging producers pay the waste management costs associated with the packaging they place on the market. This will encourage producers to consider the necessity of any packaging they use. In developing extended producer responsibility for packaging, we will also consider how the use of packaging reuse and refill systems can be encouraged. The Government has stated its intention to bring forward proposals for reuse/refill targets by the end of 2023 and introduce targets or obligations on producers from 2025. The Government consultation on extended producer responsibility for packaging closed on 4 June 2021, more details can be found at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/extended-producer-responsibility/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging/>.

■ Waste Disposal: Crime

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[10183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Environment Agency's surveillance powers in respect of tackling waste crime.

Rebecca Pow:

No recent assessment has been made of the adequacy of the Environment Agency's surveillance powers in respect of tackling waste crime, nor is one planned. The Environment Agency considers its existing authority to conduct directed surveillance adequate.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[10184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Government agencies in addition to the Joint Unit for Waste Crime conduct separate investigations into waste crime.

Rebecca Pow:

In England the Environment Agency is responsible for the regulation of the waste management sector. This includes the investigation of, and enforcement against, criminal activity in the sector.

Waste crime includes a broad spectrum of illegal activity, including large-scale illegal dumping of waste, avoidance of Landfill Tax, deliberate misdescription of waste, and fly-tipping. Bodies other than the Environment Agency may take responsibility for investigating and taking action against criminal activity as well. For example, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) undertakes investigations into illegal activity regarding Landfill Tax, while local authorities also have powers to tackle certain types of waste crime, such as fly-tipping.

The Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) brings agencies together in partnership, including HMRC, to investigate and take enforcement action against criminal activity in the waste management sector. The JUWC has developed intelligence links and sharing arrangements with a wide range of organisations in the public and private sectors including law enforcement agencies, infrastructure providers and the financial services sector.

■ Waste Disposal: Digital Technology

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[10182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Serious and organised waste crime: 2018 review published by his Department on 14 November 2018, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the recommendation on the mandatory electronic tracking of waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government addressed the recommendations set out in the review into serious and organised waste crime through the Resources and Waste Strategy. This

committed to mandating the electronic tracking of waste, subject to consultation. The Environment Bill includes powers to introduce mandatory waste tracking and a consultation is planned for later this year.

In parallel we asked five organisations to explore and develop ideas for waste tracking using the Government's GovTech Catalyst Challenge Fund. The feasibility projects included research into tracking waste through electronic chips and sensors, the use of blockchain, and open data standards, as well as new data analytics and the use of artificial intelligence, to help users decide what to do with the waste they produce. We also conducted further user research to improve our understanding of the reporting requirements of businesses, local authorities, regulators and Government. This information has helped inform the development of the consultation and define the functionality of a future digital service.

■ Waste Disposal: Transport

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[10575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the amount of CO₂ produced by transporting waste produced in the UK outside of the UK.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[10576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that waste exported for recycling is recycled and not disposed of in another manner.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[10577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the volume of waste exported out of the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government has not made any assessment of CO₂ produced by the export of UK waste. The UK monitors and reports emissions from the shipping industry through the National Emissions Inventory but this information is not disaggregated to the level of individual cargo movements.

The export of UK waste for disposal is generally prohibited, save for the strictly limited exceptions which are laid out in the UK Plan for Shipments of Waste. Under the UK legislation on waste shipments, businesses involved in the export of wastes are required to take all necessary steps to ensure that the waste they ship is managed in an environmentally sound manner throughout its shipment and during its recycling. All waste exports need to be made in accordance with the relevant legislation and we have a system of inspections in place to verify compliance. The regulators mount targeted inspections at UK ports working with the shipping sector to help detect and prevent illegal waste shipments. Individuals and businesses found to be exporting waste in contravention of the requirements in the legislation waste can face a two-year jail term and an unlimited fine.

We have pledged to introduce tougher controls on waste exports, and the Environment Bill includes a power to introduce mandatory electronic tracking of waste which will make it harder for criminals to obtain and export waste illegally.

We are also taking action to reduce the volume of waste generated in the first place. Our approach is focused on encouraging greater uptake of reusable alternatives and increasing supply and demand for secondary materials to be recycled in the UK. The Resources and Waste Strategy for England, published in December 2018, sets out the Government's plans to reduce, reuse, and recycle more than we do now. Our target is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the life of the 25 Year Environment Plan, but for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

■ Wines: Imports

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of additional costs to UK wine importers following the end of the labelling grace period on 30 September 2022.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is committed to supporting wine businesses across the country to adapt to new processes for importing wine into the UK as a result of new trading arrangements. Our overriding objective is to ensure these processes are as simple as possible.

We have not conducted a full assessment of any additional costs which UK wine importers may face following the end of the labelling grace period with the EU. However, transitional measures are currently in place until September 2022. This period will help minimise costs to businesses from changes stemming from our exit from the EU. This will provide us with enough time to assess the matter and understand any implications for importers.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of additional costs to UK wine importers resulting from changes in organic certification following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK retained Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and Commission Regulations (EC) Nos 889/2008 and 1235/2008 for organics. These regulations state that any business involved in activities at any stage of production, preparation, import and distribution of organic products must be certified by an approved certification body. This is to ensure the integrity of organic produce from the grower to the consumer.

Defra approves six control bodies to operate in the UK. These are private bodies which set their own fee structures for certification. Any information regarding fees for particular businesses would be commercially sensitive information, private to the

individual business and their control body. As a result, it would not be possible for us to make an assessment of the added costs for wine importers.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Australia

Andrew Rosindell: [\[10203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with their Australian counterparts on their decision to shut the Australian embassy in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Ministers and senior officials have frequent contact with their Australian counterparts on a range of issues, including our future approach in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister discussed Afghanistan with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on 14 May. There has been close collaboration between UK and Australia on Afghanistan over the last 20 years. We will continue to support Afghanistan together, working towards a more stable, peaceful future for Afghanistan, and the wider region.

■ Afghanistan: Religious Freedom

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[10702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Afghanistan on protections for religious minorities in that country.

Nigel Adams:

UK Ministers and officials frequently raise the protection of religious minorities with Afghan counterparts. Most recently, on 2 June Lord Ahmad spoke to Afghan Foreign Minister Hanif Atmar to offer condolences for the attack on 8 May on a school in a predominantly Hazara area of Kabul. British Embassy officials in Kabul regularly meet with representatives from religious minority groups to hear their concerns. We continue to make public condemnations about targeted killings, and violence against minorities and human rights advocates, calling for transparent investigations. Only a negotiated and inclusive settlement will bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan. We continue to make clear to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in the country, including protection for women and minority groups.

■ Africa: Bilateral Aid

Stephen Doughty: [\[13076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral overseas development assistance has been allocated to (a) Gambia, (b) Cameroon, (c) Mali, (d) the Central African Republic and (e) Senegal in 2021/22.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral ODA his Department has allocated to (a) Algeria, (b) Angola, (c) Benin, (d) Botswana and (e) Burkina Faso in 2021-22.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to (a) Burundi, (b) Chad, (c) Comoros, (d) the DRC and (e) Congo in 2021-22.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral overseas development assistance has been allocated to (a) Cote D'Ivoire, (b) South Africa, (c) Malawi, (d) Zambia and (e) Mozambique in the 2021-22 financial year.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Overseas Development Assistance has been allocated to (a) Kenya, (b) Tanzania, (c) Sudan, (d) South Sudan and (e) Somalia in 2021-22.

James Duddridge:

Full budgets per country and a final audited spend for 2021/22 will be published in due course, including in our regular Statistics on International Development and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

■ **Argentina: Gender Recognition**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[13173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the (a) Argentinian Government and (b) other members of the Equal Rights Coalition on their country's self-ID legislation for trans individuals; and if the Government will take steps to implement international best practice on LGBTQ+ rights.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to working with our international partners to promote and protect the rights of LGBT+ people.

In our role as co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) the UK and Argentina led a consultative process to develop the ERC's first Strategy and Five-Year Implementation Plan to guide and shape the ERC's work to advance LGBTI+ equality. The UK works closely with ERC member states, including Argentina, to share best practice on LGBTI+ rights and plan to launch the Five Year Strategy at an ERC conference on 6 and 7 July. The Implementation Plan is based on International best practice and urges ERC member states to "provide legal gender recognition through an accessible, quick, and transparent administrative process and without

abusive requirements (including sterilization, divorce, treatment or diagnostic) as a minimum standard."

■ **Bangladesh: Humanitarian Situation**

Sir Mike Penning: [\[10227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 3815, what discussions he has had with the Bangladeshi Government on the sustainability of life on Bhasan Char.

Nigel Adams:

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh participated in a visit to Bhasan Char on 3 April, along with heads of a number of diplomatic missions. They also met with the Government of Bangladesh this month to discuss the situation there following recent UN visits. Concerns over the risks of cyclones and the monsoon have been raised, and we note the investments made by the Government of Bangladesh in cyclone shelters and reinforcing embankments. Further conversations are needed between the Government of Bangladesh and the UN on a protection framework for the refugees on the island.

■ **Bangladesh: Rohingya**

Sir Mike Penning: [\[10226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 3815, what discussions he has had with the Bangladeshi Government on the evacuation procedures for the Rohingya refugees on Bhasan Char during the approaching monsoon season in that region.

Nigel Adams:

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh participated in a visit to Bhasan Char on 3 April, along with heads of a number of diplomatic missions. They also met with the Government of Bangladesh this month to discuss the situation there following recent UN visits. Concerns over the risks of cyclones and the monsoon have been raised, and we note the investments made by the Government of Bangladesh in cyclone shelters and reinforcing embankments. Further conversations are needed between the Government of Bangladesh and the UN on a protection framework for the refugees on the island.

■ **Belize: Bilateral Aid**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to Belize in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to Colombia in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to Cuba in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to Costa Rica in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[12242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to El Salvador in 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

Following a thorough review, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO's) aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against the challenging financial climate of COVID-19. FCDO programme managers are currently working with their suppliers and delivery partners to determine the precise allocations for each programme. Each country's full budget will be published in due course, including in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts, and in the 'Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend' publication.

The portfolio agreed by the Foreign Secretary will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference, and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money. We remain a world-leading aid donor, and across HMG, will spend more than £10 billion this year to fight poverty, tackle climate change, and improve global health.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

Bambos Charalambous: [\[10559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the Government's ability to return UK citizens who are abroad in the event of closure of UK borders.

Nigel Adams:

The UK border is open and at no point has the border been closed to UK citizens. Commercial travel options are available for UK citizens wishing to return to the UK. British nationals requiring assistance overseas should contact their nearest embassy, consulate or high commission. Our consular staff endeavour to give appropriate and tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a

day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. This support includes providing assistance to return to the UK where it is appropriate. Assistance that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office can provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication "Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>).

■ Channel Ferries

Grahame Morris:

[12359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of Article (a) 18 and (b) 19 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on passenger ferry services operated between Dover and Calais.

Wendy Morton:

We have made no such assessment of cross channel passenger ferry services.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) allows a coastal State to claim a territorial sea of up to 12 nautical miles.

UNCLOS Part II, Section 3 sets out the rules on "Innocent passage in the Territorial Sea". Articles 18 and 19 define the "Meaning of passage" and "Meaning of innocent passage". In the territorial sea, all ships enjoy the right of innocent passage (defined in the Convention as passage, which is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal State).

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill:

[13167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 6407 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what recent assessment his Department have made of the capacity of existing global vaccine manufacturing that is not being used to produce covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

We are working with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the COVAX Supply Chain, Manufacturing Taskforce, and other partners to expand access to quality and affordable vaccine supplies, including assessing existing manufacturing capacity to meet COVID-19 needs while also sustaining supplies for routine immunisation.

■ Denmark: Espionage

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[13192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made as to whether Danish security services have assisted foreign security agencies to spy on UK politicians or officials.

Wendy Morton:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments not to comment on intelligence matters.

■ **Gaza: Israel**

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[12188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of reports that Israel has prevented cancer patients from exiting Gaza for treatment since the beginning of recent hostilities; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. The UK priority now is ensuring timely humanitarian access in to and out of Gaza, including for people to leave Gaza for critical health services. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. The wounded and critically ill should be able to access the urgent medical care they need. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 1 June.

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[12189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the joint communication issued by nine UN Special Rapporteurs on the recent hostilities in Gaza which found that potential war crimes had been committed in that conflict, what steps he is taking to ensure accountability for violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a steadfast supporter of international justice and does not hold back from voicing or raising concern about Israel's actions when warranted. However, Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

■ **Human Rights: Sanctions**

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[12185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) body or (b) person is responsible for determining who is designated under the UK Global Human Rights sanctions regime.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[12186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, where and how information in respect of the decision to place a person on the UK Global Human Rights sanctions regime is (a) disseminated, (b) published and (c) reported.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020, decisions to designate will be made by the Secretary of State and may only take place where the Secretary of State has "reasonable grounds to suspect" that an individual or entity "is or has been" involved in one of the serious human rights violations or abuses falling within the Regulations. The designation must also be considered "appropriate" having regard to the purpose of the regulations and the likely significant effects on the target. The regulations place an obligation on the UK Government to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to inform a person of their designation and to publicise this. As part of this, we will publish designations on the "UK Sanctions List" on GOV.UK.

■ Hungary: Human Rights

Lisa Nandy:

[\[12129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Prime Minister raised the issues of (a) women's rights, (b) LGBT+ rights, (c) the rule of law and democracy, (d) press freedom and (e) the rights of asylum seekers in Hungary at his meeting with his counterpart, Viktor Orbán, on 28 May 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister met Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán on 28 May. As incoming President of the Visegrád Group from 1 July this year, cooperation with Hungary is important for the UK's prosperity and security. The PM's meeting with Viktor Orbán was an important moment to promote UK interests.

The Prime Minister raised his significant concerns about human rights in Hungary, including gender equality, LGBT rights and media freedom. The leaders also discussed a number of foreign policy issues including Russia, Belarus and China. The Prime Minister encouraged Hungary to use their influence to promote democracy and stability. The Government has condemned Orbán's references to migrants as 'Muslim Invaders', which were divisive and wrong. Where we have concerns, we do not shy away from raising them.

It is right that we build our bilateral relationships through dialogue and conversation. The Government will continue to work closely with the Hungarian Government, businesses, civil society, NGOs and religious communities on our shared priorities.

■ India: Religious Freedom

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[10701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Government of India on protections for people practicing minority religions in that country.

Nigel Adams:

Human rights form a regular part of our dialogue with India. Most recently, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State for South Asia, discussed the situation for Christians in India with India's Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kishan Reddy, on 15 March. Our Acting High Commissioner in New Delhi also discussed UK Parliamentary interest in minorities in India with officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs on 5 January. A senior FCDO official discussed the situation for India's religious minorities with the Indian High Commissioner on 29 December.

The British High Commission in New Delhi regularly meets religious representatives and has run projects promoting minority rights. This year, they supported an interfaith leadership programme for a cohort of emerging Indian faith leaders, creating an opportunity to exchange expertise on leading modern, inclusive faith communities, and promoting values of tolerance and multi-culturalism.

■ Iraq: Terrorism**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[10341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department made of the effect on security in Iraq of escalating conflict between Governmental forces and the Popular Mobilisation Forces in Iraq.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[10342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the arrest of Qasem Musleh on community tensions in Iraq.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[10343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the circumstances surrounding the murder of Ihab al-Wazni on 9 May 2021 in Karbala, Iraq.

James Cleverly:

The show of force and threats from armed groups around Baghdad's International Zone in May undermines the Iraqi people's repeated calls for peace and respect for the rule of law. No one should use force and threats to impede criminal investigations. On the 2 June the Foreign Secretary spoke to Iraq's Prime Minister Kadhimi to condemn threats by armed groups. The UK fully supports the government's investigation into the actions of armed groups and we stand with Iraq against militias agitating for escalation.

We strongly condemn the killing of the activist Ihab al-Wazni. Impunity for the killing of activists since October 19 has only led to more deaths. There is an urgent need for concrete measures to hold perpetrators accountable and protect Iraqi citizens.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[10344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the influence of militia groups on community tensions in Iraq.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[10345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the influence of foreign state-based actors upon militia groups in Iraq.

James Cleverly:

The UK is concerned by the activities of militia groups seeking to sow instability across Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. These militia groups undermine the rule of law and the Iraqi people's desire for peace. The Foreign Secretary visited Iraq 8-9 June and highlighted the need for greater accountability for human rights violations by militia groups with President Salih and Prime Minister Kadhim. He also emphasised to Prime Minister Kadhim and the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, President Nechirvan Barzani, UK support for their efforts to tackle armed groups and militias agitating for escalation.

■ Israel: Violence

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[10204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential correlation between the Turkish Government's support for terrorist groups in Palestine and the recent violence in Israel.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear Israel, the Palestinians and leaders in the region must now work together to find a durable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence, and delivers a sustainable and just peace based on a two state solution. The UK continues to work with the parties and regional partners, including Turkey, to urge de-escalation and efforts to tackle the drivers of conflict.

■ Myanmar: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

We are concerned about the impact of Covid on Myanmar's population, and the increased vulnerability of internally displaced people as a result of the coup. Protecting access to basic healthcare remains a UK priority, and we are ensuring that UK aid continues to support life-saving service delivery. We are in close contact with

the UN, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other local civil society organisations, and we are ensuring as much flexibility as we can in their use of UK aid to enable them to operate safely and continue providing support. We are working with partners to understand specific needs and how Covid is impacting local communities.

■ **Nepal: Coronavirus**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what aid-based support he has provided to Nepal in their response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

In response to an urgent request for medical supplies from the Government of Nepal, Her Majesty's Government (HMG) donated 260 ventilators and various pieces of personal protective equipment which arrived in Nepal on 28 May. The same flight carried two HMG-funded health experts to assess the situation and support Nepal's COVID-19 response. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the British Embassy in Kathmandu has reprioritised over £40 million of its development budget including: the construction of an oxygen plant in a Kathmandu hospital; technical advice to local government on managing the impact of COVID-19; water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to support around 300,000 people; safe spaces for women in isolation centres; cash and voucher assistance for the most vulnerable; and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women. The UK is also a leading donor to COVAX, having committed £548 million to the scheme. COVAX has allocated 2,000,000 vaccine doses to Nepal so far, of which 348,000 have already been delivered.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the Nepalese Government's ability to adequately respond to the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is working closely with federal and local government in Nepal to support the ongoing response to COVID-19. This includes a donation of 260 ventilators and various pieces of personal protective equipment, which arrived in Nepal on 28 May in response to an urgent request for medical supplies from the Government of Nepal. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the British Embassy in Kathmandu has helped Nepal respond to COVID-19 by reprioritising over £40 million of its development budget. This has included support to Nepal's federal and local government, including technical advice to local government in infection hotspots on managing the impact of COVID-19, as well as expert advice to the Ministry of Health and Population on data management, epidemiological analysis, and designing warehouses for vaccine storage.

■ **Northern Cyprus: Aviation**

Julian Sturdy: [\[10364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to authorise direct flights to North Cyprus.

Wendy Morton:

In line with the rest of the international community, with the sole exception of Turkey, the UK does not recognise the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" as an independent state, and Ercan airport in the north of Cyprus is not recognised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation as an international airport. As a result, we cannot negotiate an Air Services Agreement with the administration in the north of Cyprus, so there are no direct flights. The UK Court of Appeal has also confirmed that direct flights between the UK and the north of Cyprus would breach the UK's international obligations under the 1944 Chicago Convention on Civil Aviation. The UK Government remains convinced that a comprehensive settlement is the best chance of resolving these complex issues.

■ **Northern Cyprus: Peace Negotiations**

Julian Sturdy: [\[10365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what role officials in his Department are undertaking in negotiations for a settlement on the island of Cyprus between North Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN process to reach a Cyprus Settlement, which will be good for Cyprus, regional stability and UK interests. On 27-29 April, in support of the efforts led by the UN Secretary General to find common ground on a way forward to resolve the Cyprus Issue, the Foreign Secretary represented the UK as a Guarantor Power at informal UN talks in Geneva. He was supported by Officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

At the meeting, the Foreign Secretary continued to urge all sides to demonstrate flexibility and compromise to find a solution to the Cyprus Issue within the UN Security Council parameters. This followed UK messaging to the parties ahead of the talks, including the Foreign Secretary's visit to the island on 4 February where he met President Anastasiades, Turkish Cypriot leader Tatar and the UN. Ahead of the talks, during my visit to Cyprus (7-9 April), I reiterated this message and the UK's support for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue. To this end, FCDO Ministers and Officials will continue to engage with all parties in support of the UN process.

■ Oman: Cultural Heritage

Anthony Browne:

[\[10691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to support the safeguarding of historical British military artefacts, including the only surviving cannon of the Commonwealth of England, currently in Oman.

James Cleverly:

The UK and Oman enjoy a deep and historical relationship. We are committed to working together on areas of shared interest and common causes, including to protect and safeguard our shared heritage. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will talk to their Omani counterparts about the British military artefacts.

■ Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[13164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 4661 on Overseas Aid: Cost Effectiveness, if he will publish a list of the attendees of each of the four meetings to review, revise and approve proposals on Official Development Assistance.

Nigel Adams:

As per the answer to Question 4661 all departments subject to the ODA prioritisation exercise were represented at ministerial level in the review meetings. This included the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (as was at the time), Department for International Development (as was at the time) Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for International Trade, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports, Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office (under the Paymaster General for the Cross Government Funds).

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[13168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Permanent Secretary sought a ministerial direction prior to the announcement in November 2020 that the Government would not allocate 0.7 per cent of GNI in 2021 for Official Development Assistance.

Nigel Adams:

As the Secretary of State is acting in accordance with the provisions that govern spending on Official Development Assistance, including the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, no Ministerial Direction was sought.

■ **Overseas Aid: Cost Effectiveness**

Preet Kaur Gill: **[13165]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 4662 on Overseas Aid: Cost Effectiveness, if he will publish the FCO and DFID value for money assessments referred to in that answer.

Nigel Adams:

Value for Money is embedded in everything we do in the FCDO - from the design of programmes to delivery in countries across the world. We ensure that our actions align with evidence to maximise the impact of our foreign policy & fight against poverty.

Preet Kaur Gill: **[13166]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 4662 on Overseas Aid: Cost Effectiveness, whether he had any input into other Government departments' value for money assessments.

Nigel Adams:

As per the answer to Question 4662 all departments are responsible for their own value for money assessment against their suggested reductions.

■ **Racial Discrimination: UN Resolutions**

Douglas Chapman: **[8638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government did not support the UN resolution A/RES/75/237 on action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is fully committed to the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as to the promotion and protection of human rights for all without discrimination on any grounds. We will continue to be one of the strongest advocates for those United Nations mechanisms that help to combat racism.

However, as set out in our explanation of vote (<https://undocs.org/A/C.3/75/SR.15> - last accessed 10 June 2021), the main sponsors of resolution A/RES/75/237 were unwilling to engage with UK suggestions on the text. States had an opportunity to shape the debate on racism at the United Nations in a way that brought countries together, forging a collaborative approach and working with civil society to uproot the evils of violence and discrimination. The UK hope that the main sponsors will seize those opportunities at the next session and take an approach that recognized the need for collaboration and consensus.

■ Saudi Arabia: Oppression

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[10700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help prevent the persecution of atheists in Saudi Arabia.

James Cleverly:

The UK strongly supports the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), which is restricted in Saudi Arabia. Ministers and our Ambassador in Saudi Arabia regularly raise and discuss freedom of religion or belief.

On 24 May 2021, I raised FoRB with the Saudi President of the Human Rights Commission during my visit to Saudi Arabia. Our views are well known and the UK will continue to encourage further human rights reform in Saudi Arabia.

■ South Asia: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is planning to provide additional support to the (a) India, (b) Nepal, (c) Sri Lanka and (d) Afghanistan to assist with their response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is leading the international response to COVID-19. We have made available new public commitments worth up to £1.3 billion of ODA to counter the health, economic, and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19 and to support the global effort to distribute vaccines equitably.

In India, there is significant UK-India scientific and medical collaboration underway with our Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific advisor regularly meeting their Indian counterparts to share advice, insight and expertise. We have also recently launched the 'UK-India Clinician Knowledge Exchange' which brings together clinicians from the UK and India to enable mutual sharing of best practices.

For Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and previous support to India, I refer the Honourable Member to my answers of 7 June to PQ 7832, 1 June to PQ 5187 and 5185 and 20 May to PQ 2477.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[10628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

Sri Lanka is a human rights priority country for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). We regularly monitor and report on human rights

developments and raise concerns with the government of Sri Lanka, both privately and publicly. These concerns include the harassment of civil society, the range of civilian functions brought under military control, the situation for minority communities, and the importance of accountability and reconciliation following the conflict.

The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised concerns with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to the UK about a number of human rights issues, most recently during calls in January and May respectively. The UK government also led a new resolution on promoting accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka which was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on 23 March. The resolution provides a continued framework for international engagement on human rights in Sri Lanka, and highlights serious concerns about the situation, including those detailed in the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It calls on the government of Sri Lanka to make progress on accountability and human rights, and stresses the importance of a comprehensive accountability process for all violations and abuses committed in Sri Lanka. We will continue to engage with the government of Sri Lanka on these important issues.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights and International Law

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[12184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many designations under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime her Department has issued on Sri Lankan officials accused of breaches of international and human rights law since the 18 May 2009.

Nigel Adams:

The Global Human Rights Sanctions regime gives the UK a powerful tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. No Sri Lankan officials have been designated under the sanctions regime to date and it is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designation.

Sanctions are one response among a number of diplomatic tools. The UK government, alongside our partners in the Core Group, has led international efforts over many years to promote accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka, including at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). On 23 March the UNHRC adopted a new UK-led resolution, 46/1. This resolution provides a continued framework for international engagement on human rights in Sri Lanka, and highlights serious concerns about the situation, including those detailed in the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It calls on the government of Sri Lanka to make progress on accountability and human rights, and stresses the importance of a comprehensive accountability process for all violations and abuses committed in Sri Lanka. We continue to engage with the government of Sri Lanka on these important issues.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

Paul Blomfield:

[\[10359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to ensure unfettered access to humanitarian aid for people in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights, and continues to do so. Currently 5.2 million are in need of food aid. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. We have raised these points with the Government in Addis Ababa consistently and at the highest levels, most recently during the visit of the UK Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, from 19-25 May. He has called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, a call joined by 14 other nations including the US, Germany and France. I also discussed the issue on 9 June with development ministers from leading donor countries, including G7 nations.

UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. Teams from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa have visited Tigray on six occasions since March, meeting with humanitarian agencies working in the region. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray.

■ Travel Information: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[13070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that his Department's foreign travel advice for individual countries matches the latest covid-19 travel advice published by the Government.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO travel advice has a box at the top of all the pages setting out the Government message that to prevent new COVID-19 variants from entering the UK, travellers should not travel to Amber or Red list countries. Every page also states the Traffic Light status for that country.

FCDO travel advice aims to inform British nationals of the risks of travelling to a country so that they can make informed decisions about travelling abroad. It is aimed at British nationals, wherever they live, not just those living in the UK. Only individuals can make an informed decision on whether or not to travel based on their personal circumstances, their judgement of the risks, the relevant legislation or regulations where they are resident and the entry requirements of their destination country.

■ Uighurs: Human Rights

Janet Daby:

[10643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that (a) the Chinese government is testing emotion recognition technology on detained Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region and (b) technology firms Hikvision and Dahua are developing facial recognition technologies to identify and track Uyghurs; and whether he plans to take steps to prevent (a) Government departments and (b) firms and consumers in the UK from purchasing goods from firms that are reportedly providing technology to the Chinese government for the surveillance of Uyghurs.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to promoting the ethical development and deployment of technology in the UK and overseas. We are aware of a number of Chinese technology companies linked to violations taking place in Xinjiang, and are monitoring the situation closely.

On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced a series of measures to help ensure UK businesses and the public sector are not complicit in human rights violations or abuses in Xinjiang. These measures, which are being implemented by the UK Government, include a review of export controls; the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act; increasing support for UK government bodies to exclude suppliers complicit in violations or abuses; and strengthening the Overseas Business Risk guidance to highlight that businesses engaged in the fields of surveillance, biometrics, or tracking technology are at heightened risk of complicity in human rights violations in Xinjiang.

The UK Government has also published guidance to help cutting-edge UK firms negotiate the ethical, legal and commercial questions they may encounter when working with Chinese businesses, supporting safe and appropriate UK-China collaboration in digital and tech. The guidance provides firms with clear, up-to-date information and specialist support which reflect the UK's values and take account of national security concerns.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abingdon Health

Philip Davies:

[10262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which companies and organisations competed for the contract that was awarded in October 2020 to Abingdon Health to provide 1 million rapid covid-19 tests; and which criteria Abingdon Health fulfilled in order to be awarded that contract.

Philip Davies:

[\[10263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his cancellation of outstanding orders for rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) tests with Abingdon Health in January 2021, what steps he has taken to improve his Department's commissioning process.

Jo Churchill:

No contract was awarded to Abingdon Health Limited in October 2020.

The Department continues to use the appropriate procurement procedures within the Public Contract Regulations to award contracts to suppliers. All suppliers pass through a rigorous regulatory and validation process to ensure that they meet the same high quality standards.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Justin Madders:

[\[10447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to publish a strategy for unscheduled care to meet increases in demand.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service recently set out plans in the '2021/22 priorities and operational planning guidance', including for urgent and emergency care. There are no current plans to publish a further strategy for unscheduled care.

■ Acute Beds

Justin Madders:

[\[10443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to expand capacity and restore the number of acute hospital beds.

Justin Madders:

[\[10446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the future capacity needs of acute hospitals.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service trusts have set operational plans, including their hospital bed capacity, for the first half of 2021/22 which take account of the current operating context, including the ongoing impact of infection prevention and control and social distancing and demand for future elective, non-elective and COVID-19 patient management. Decisions on NHS capacity will be kept under active review.

■ Ambulance Services: Private Sector

Justin Madders:

[\[10450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many private ambulances were used to respond to (a) 999 and (b) 111 calls (i) for each month since March 2019 and (ii) in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

John McDonnell: [\[10144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 12 May 2021, Official Report, column 158, what steps he is taking to increase brain tumour research.

Edward Argar:

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). Brain tumours are a difficult research area with a relatively small community therefore we are taking action to grow the field, through workshops for researchers and training for clinicians.

The NIHR released a public announcement to the research community in April 2018 for brain tumour research funding applications. We are relying on researchers to submit high-quality research proposals. All applications that were fundable in open competition have been funded.

■ **Cancer: Mental Health**

Alex Norris: [\[12275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the NHS Mental Health Dashboard to include data on cancer and mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no plans to do so.

■ **Contraceptives: Ethnic Groups**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[11655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle disparities in access to contraception experienced by Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.

Jo Churchill:

The Department are developing a new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, which will be published in 2021. We will consider issues relating to disparities in access to contraception experienced by black, Asian and ethnic minority communities and health inequalities in relation to sexual and reproductive health more broadly, as part of the process to develop the Strategy.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[10201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 180434 on Coronavirus, whether his Department plans to make an assessment of the timescale for herd immunity to covid-19 being reached in the UK.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[10202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 180435 on Coronavirus, whether his Department plans to make an assessment on the effectiveness of covid-19 lockdown restrictions once herd immunity has been reached.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has no plans to make such an assessment.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Justin Madders:

[\[10452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has been made of potential risks of using covid-19 lateral flow tests regularly.

Jo Churchill:

Lateral flow tests or rapid lateral flow antigen tests have been rigorously tested and are safe to use on a regular basis.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[10629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make covid-19 testing kits for the purpose of international travel affordable.

Jo Churchill:

Since its introduction, costs for travel testing has fallen significantly.

Charging by private providers is based on a market model and the Government has made NHS Test and Trace testing available at the market mid-point to ensure appropriately priced tests are available. A list of providers offering testing bundles for international arrivals, which can be filtered by cost, is available on GOV.UK to find an appropriately priced test. We also offer deferred payment plans and hardship support for people who cannot afford to pay for the cost of managed quarantine and testing.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[10374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of successful applications from volunteer vaccinators who have not been deployed during the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

Harriett Baldwin:

[10375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how long the personal information and references provided by volunteer covid-19 vaccinator applicants will be retained by the National Vaccination Programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Working in partnership with St John Ambulance and the Royal Voluntary Service, 420,000 volunteers have been deployed to help support the COVID-19 vaccine programme. St John Ambulance holds the only nationally procured contract for volunteer vaccinators and of the 26,858 individuals recruited to support the vaccination programme in partnership with St John Ambulance, approximately 11,510 of these volunteers have not yet been deployed.

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold any personal data on volunteers within the vaccination programme sourced through the national supply chain contracts. Lead employers would retain the information of locally sourced volunteers and this would be the responsibility of an individual organisation. The data controller is St John Ambulance or the Royal Voluntary Service and all data received to the national programme team is anonymised.

Rachael Maskell:

[12195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that no-one has to wait more than 12 weeks for their second covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Vaccine supplies have already been set aside to ensure that everyone who has already received their first dose will receive their second dose within 12 weeks of their first.

The National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is the centralised service for the management of both the COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccination programmes established by NHS England. If an individual is invited for a COVID-19 vaccination via a general practitioner (GP), and once the patient has a vaccination, this information is entered onto the patients' GP record and recorded on NIMS. A second vaccination appointment can then be offered to the patient in the following 12-week period, in line with national guidance. Vaccinations will be recorded on NIMS and updates sent to GP systems. NHS England's guidance states that all vaccination centres should ensure that all second dose appointments are booked in by the twelfth week after the first dose.

As a result of the Delta variant against which vaccine efficacy is much greater after the second dose, appointments for a second dose of the vaccine are now being brought forward from 12 to eight weeks for those in cohorts one to nine who are yet to receive their second dose.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Bilateral Aid**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[12103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much bilateral aid his Department has allocated to (a) Afghanistan, (b) India, (c) Pakistan, (d) Bangladesh, (e) Nepal, (f) Philippines, (g) Myanmar, (h) Bhutan and (i) Sri Lanka in 2021-22.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not available in the format requested as we do not routinely allocate funding at country level.

■ DNACPR Decisions: Coronavirus**Daisy Cooper:**[\[10666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a ministerial oversight group to investigate the use of Do Not Attempt Resuscitation during the covid-19 outbreak has been established; and when that group plans to report.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Following the Care Quality Commission's report into how Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation decisions were made during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department committed to the establishment of a Ministerial Oversight Group to drive forward the report's recommendations. The Ministerial Oversight Group met on 8 June and will report on progress in due course.

■ Food: Advertising**John Stevenson:**[\[10318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether reformulated food and drink which is high in fat, salt or sugar will not be allowed to be promoted or advertised under the Government's proposals to restrict those practices.

Jo Churchill:

Products that are reformulated and achieve the Nutrient Profiling Model threshold will be out of scope of the restrictions and therefore able to be promoted.

■ Food: Allergies**Justin Madders:**[\[10454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of rules on food labelling for safeguarding people with allergies.

Jo Churchill:

The Food Standards Agency is undertaking an ongoing programme of work to improve the quality of life for people with food hypersensitivity, which includes responsibility for the provision of allergen information and labelling. All food businesses are under a legal obligation to provide information on the presence of the 14 major allergens in food and this information can be provided in different ways depending on how the food is packaged.

New labelling rules for 'prepacked for direct sale' food are being implemented across the United Kingdom from 1 October 2021 and require full ingredients listing, with the 14 allergens emphasised. This change means more types of food will now be labelled with allergen information.

For those who are hypersensitive to foods not in the major allergens list, the Food Standards Agency recommends that consumers check the ingredients list on prepacked food and speak to businesses when they purchase non-prepacked food.

■ Gender Recognition: Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[10493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 787 on Gender Recognition: Health Services, how funding has been allocated to gender dysphoria services; which services have been in receipt of that funding; and how much each area in receipt of that funding has received in each of the last 10 years.

Jo Churchill:

Gender dysphoria clinic funding operates on a provider basis, so patients are funded through regional teams irrespective of where the patient is from. Total funding based on contract values in 2019/20 was £36.5 million with an additional £7.9 million in 2021/22 for the four new pilot clinics. These figures exclude the cost of prescribing hormone drugs which are funded by the patient's clinical commissioning group. Information on funding allocation by area is not collected centrally.

■ General Practitioners

Marsha De Cordova: [\[11657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department can provide a timeline for when regular face-to-face GP appointments may return as commonplace following the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

General practice is open and has been throughout the pandemic. In March 2021, more than half of appointments were face-to-face. On 20 May 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published updated standard operating procedures for general practice. A blended approach of both face to face and remote appointments should be available to patients according to clinical appropriateness. Patient preferences for face-to-face and remote care need to be respected unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. Remote services alongside face to face appointments provides extra flexibility and convenience for patients.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Tim Farron: [\[11526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether EU nationals living in the UK before 31 December 2020, who go on to be granted status under the EU

Settlement Scheme, will be (a) liable for chargeable healthcare as set out in NHS Charging Regulations Guidance or (b) entitled to free healthcare.

Edward Argar:

Citizens of a European Union country, and their family members who were lawfully residing in the United Kingdom by 31 December 2020 will keep their right to healthcare on the same basis as UK residents, as long as they meet the ordinary residence test. From 1 July 2021, they must have been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

An individual who is eligible to apply to the EUSS but who has not submitted an application by 30 June 2021 will be chargeable. If they receive and pay for relevant services, and then later make a late application which is granted, they will not be refunded for the earlier treatment.

■ **Independent Reconfiguration Panel: Reform**

Munira Wilson:

[\[10676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure there is a public consultation on the proposed reforms to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel as set out in the Health and Social Care White Paper.

Edward Argar:

We have no plans at this time to consult specifically on proposed reforms to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

■ **Inflammatory Bowel Disease**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[11680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish a strategy for the diagnosis and treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

Helen Whately:

We have no current plans to do so.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[3882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to appoint a National Clinical Director for inflammatory bowel disease.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: We have no current plans to do so.

■ **Lung Diseases: Coronavirus**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[11522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) funding and (b) other support his Department is providing to research into chronic lung conditions caused by covid-19 infection.

Jo Churchill:

The Government recognises that chronic health conditions, including chronic lung conditions, may result from a COVID-19 infection and that there is a need to invest in research to better understand these conditions and how to effectively support affected individuals. The National Institute for Health Research, with UK Research and Innovation, has funded a post-hospitalisation study to understand and improve long-term health outcomes for people hospitalised with COVID-19 and four research studies specifically looking at the long-term effects of COVID-19, in non-hospitalised individuals with funding totalling £18.5 million. In addition, a second £20 million 'long' COVID-19 research call is currently underway.

Maternity Services: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:**[\[10600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review guidance on postnatal visits during the covid-19 outbreak to remove restrictions on visiting times.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Updated guidance published on 15 April 2021 states that women should have access to support people while admitted on the antenatal or postnatal ward in line with pre-COVID-19 trust policies. There are no plans in place at this time to publish further guidance on postnatal visits.

Medicine: Research**Helen Hayes:**[\[10532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase the capacity of NHS staff to conduct medical research; and whether his Department has plans to increase the access of NHS staff to dedicated research time.

Edward Argar:

On 23 March 2021 the Government published its vision for the future of clinical research delivery in the United Kingdom. This aims to create a research positive culture across the National Health Service and all health and care settings, where all staff feel empowered and supported to participate in clinical research delivery, offering rewarding opportunities for all healthcare staff and exciting careers for those from all professional backgrounds who lead research. An implementation plan and strategy setting out how the Government will begin to deliver the vision in 2021/22 will be published later this year.

Members: Correspondence**John Penrose:**[\[10308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 1 April and 5 May 2021 on covid tests for migrants on behalf of his constituent Michael Joyce.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 8 June 2021.

Justin Madders:

[\[10462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston of 24 February 2021 on access to dental care.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 8 June 2021.

John Penrose:

[\[11524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 11 February and 6 May 2021 on behalf of constituent, David McFarlane, on the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 9 June 2021.

■ **Mental Illness: Offenders**

Janet Daby:

[\[7937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with ministerial colleagues in the (a) Home Office and (b) Ministry of Justice on the way in which the police can deal sensitively with people undergoing mental health crises; and whether he has plans to review the need for mental health professionals to attend to such circumstances.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department for Health and Social Care and the Home Office have established a Crisis Care Senior Operational Group, with membership from both Departments, the National Police Chiefs Council, the Association for Police and Crime Commissioners, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Mind and others. This group recently discussed a national agreement between mental health services, social care and the police to ensure that people detained by the police under section 136 are safely and effectively transferred into health services.

Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office officials meet regularly and are members of the cross-Government governance group overseeing implementation of the Mental Health Act 1983 reforms, as set out in the White Paper published earlier this year. This work includes our commitment to remove police stations as a designated place of safety under the Act. The Ministry of Justice is not responsible for policing.

The NHS Long Term Plan and the Mental Health Act reforms proposed in the recent White Paper aim to improve the provision of community mental health and crisis care services to ensure that people in crisis receive the care and support they urgently need from health professionals.

■ NHS: Computer Software**Munira Wilson:**[\[10673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has put in place to prevent the input of faked Lateral Flow Test results taken at home into the NHS Covid app.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS COVID-19 app allows users to manually enter a positive test result from a lateral flow device (LFD) test. If a user's LFD test is positive and they report the result as advised in the pack, they will receive a separate text and/or email with a one-off code, to enter in the app. This will trigger the user's self-isolation countdown timer and allow them to book their confirmatory laboratory test via the app. Users cannot enter a negative LFD test result into the app as codes are not sent out for these results.

The one-off eight digit code for a positive test can only be created following receipt of a valid LFD test ID number linked to the specific valid positive test result.

■ Obesity**Alex Norris:**[\[12279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department plans to provide to the proposed new Integrated Care Systems to increase access to tier 3 weight management services.

Jo Churchill:

The proposed Health and Care Bill will establish statutory integrated care systems (ICS), made up of an integrated care board and integrated care partnership, together referred to as the ICS. The integrated care board will take on the commissioning functions of the clinical commissioning group, including those that relate to tier 3 weight management services.

The NHS Long Term Plan and the 'Tackling Obesity' strategy have a number of different actions to support the drive to reduce obesity, including investment in tier 3 services for children and adults and plans are in development for this expansion.

■ Shipping: Coronavirus**Ronnie Cowan:**[\[2346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing covid-19 vaccinations to (a) UK cruise ship employees and (b) other UK seafarers working in UK waters.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department of Health and Social Care alongside the Department for Transport continues to assess how the Government can best support the vaccination of UK cruise ship employees and other UK seafarers working in UK waters. The UK Government encourages all eligible cruise ship employees and seafarers to receive a

COVID-19 vaccine in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice.

We are working closely with DfT, the Devolved Administrations and NHS England and Improvement to ensure that operational challenges in vaccinating these groups are mitigated so all those who are eligible can access the vaccine in an efficient and convenient way.

■ SureScreen Diagnostics

Philip Davies:

[\[10264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Surescreen Diagnostics has been awarded a contract for 24 months until January 2023 for the manufacture of lateral flow antigen tests for SARS-CoV-2 in the context of the potential removal of legal limits on social contact on 21 June 2021 as set out in the Government's roadmap out of lockdown.

Philip Davies:

[\[10265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how Surescreen Diagnostics was awarded a contract for 24 months until January 2023 for the manufacture of Lateral Flow Antigen tests for SARS-CoV-2; where and how that contract was advertised; and what criteria were used to select that company.

Jo Churchill:

This contract was awarded in January 2021, before the current lockdown easing measures were announced. The contract is flexible and does not contain committed volumes of purchasing of tests. We are able to alter the amount of tests bought through this contract on a monthly basis and have the necessary contract clauses to exit the contract at short notice if required.

The contract was awarded under Regulation 32 measures in procurement procedures, based on the urgent nature of the requirement for lateral flow antigen tests and the lack of sovereign capability to produce these products in the United Kingdom. Worldwide manufacturers with tests validated for use in the UK were invited to make manufacturing proposals, including licencing production and were evaluated on the basis of a range of criteria including cost, performance and location/ability to provide security of supply.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Ed Davey:

[\[12058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to waive the cost of covid-19 tests on compassionate grounds for people travelling internationally for (a) funerals, (b) caring duties and (c) medical reasons.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is not currently considering whether to create policy to waive the costs of COVID-19 tests on compassionate grounds.

The costs of travel testing have fallen significantly since they were first introduced. Charging by private providers is based on a market model, with NHS Test and Trace testing at the mid-market level. We also offer deferred payment plans and hardship support for people who cannot afford to pay for the cost of managed quarantine and testing. In some circumstances this may be available to those who are not in receipt of income related benefits.

■ **UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium**

Philip Davies: [\[10256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the purpose is of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium; and on what date that consortium was founded.

Philip Davies: [\[10257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the membership of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium; and on what date each Member was admitted to that consortium.

Philip Davies: [\[10258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium (a) centrally and (b) to each of its members.

Philip Davies: [\[10259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria are for membership of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium.

Philip Davies: [\[10261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium's tendering process for contracts for rapid covid-19 tests is equitable and competitive.

Jo Churchill:

The UK Rapid Test Consortium (UK-RTC) is not a Government organisation therefore the information requested on its creation and internal processes is not held centrally.

No funding has been allocated through the UK-RTC.

Members of the Consortium who have been awarded contracts have done so through compliant procurement processes unrelated to the UK-RTC.

Philip Davies: [\[10260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has entered into any contracts for the provision of rapid covid-19 tests with organisations that are not members of the UK Rapid Antigen Test Consortium.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has entered into contracts with Innova for the provision of self-test lateral flow devices (LFDs) and Innova, Abbott and Orient Gene, through their distributor Tanner Pharma, for the provision of assisted LFDs.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Finance****Martyn Day:**[\[10514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of the operation of ASPEN cards; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The PrePaid Financial Services (PFS) solution is a well-established Mastercard pre-paid card used by organisations across the UK as well as abroad and has undergone over 5 months of rigorous testing to integrate with Home Office systems.

Service users were notified of the transition in advance and a significant majority of service users have received their Aspen card and successfully activated them.

The service is functioning as expected. The cards are working, withdrawals and purchases are being made and the automated IVR activation line is operating well.

Transitions of this nature are complex, and plans to mitigate anticipated issues were, and remain, in place. Cash payments were made available in emergencies. We will continue to work with the remainder of service users to activate their cards and ensure they are supported throughout.

Our main focus is to ensure all remaining service users have an activated card so the new service can be accessed and support payments received. As part of our management of service contracts continuous improvement assessments will be factored in throughout the contract term and implemented accordingly.

Helen Hayes:[\[10538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of asylum seekers who have (a) not received new Aspen cards and (b) experienced problems activating or using the new Aspen cards; and how many of those affected were (i) pregnant, (ii) children and (iii) disabled.

Helen Hayes:[\[10539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what piloting or testing of the new Aspen Card her Department undertook prior to its roll out on 24 May 2021.

Helen Hayes: [\[10540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what due diligence checks her Department carried out on Prepaid Financial Services prior to the award of the Aspen card contract; and how many other applicants there were for that contract.

Helen Hayes: [\[10541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she is having with Prepaid Financial Services on the difficulties asylum seekers have experienced in using the new Aspen card; and what steps are being taken to improve those services.

Helen Hayes: [\[10542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support she is making available to asylum seekers who have experienced hardship as a result of the rollout of new Aspen cards.

Kevin Foster:

Service Users were notified of the transition to the new Aspen cards well in advance of the transition and a significant majority of service users have now successfully received and activated their new card. For those who are not in receipt of an activated card and for any service user who required an emergency cash payment, funds were issued to cover the period until a new card arrives and / or it is successfully activated.

Additionally, accommodation providers are conducting welfare checks in which they will ensure those eligible for asylum support payments have received their new card and they understand how to activate it. We will continue to share data with our providers to ensure they prioritise the appropriate welfare/safeguarding checks.

Prepaid Financial Services (PFS) continue to support the Home Office in rolling out new ASPEN cards to asylum accommodation addresses. They have recently amended processes to ensure service users have increased opportunities to activate cards or avoid card cancellations. They have also agreed to facilitate bulk issue of cards to accommodation blocks to ensure activation for particular user groups.

Prepaid Financial Services (PFS) were awarded the contract for a new prepaid card service following an open and competitive tendering process which included due diligence checks. The Home Office utilised a Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Framework with 4 suppliers to conduct the tendering exercise and in total, three suppliers on the Framework (including Prepaid Financial Services) made a bid for the Support Payments Card (SPC) contract.

The Prepaid Financial Services (PFS) solution is a well-established Mastercard pre-paid card used by organisations across the UK as well as abroad in schemes involving refugees and vulnerable persons. The Home Office systems underwent 5 months of rigorous testing to integrate with Home Office systems incorporating technical and operational scenarios.

The programme utilised a number of data sources and the operation is managing implementation through internal databases therefore we do not currently have the people we support broken down by a particular category. Whilst, we are satisfied the majority have activated cards, we continue to provide direct access to the Home Office for local authorities via Strategic Migration Partnerships and third sector partners to ensure payments to those with vulnerabilities are prioritised.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[13088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to ensure that any asylum seekers who have been adversely affected in the ongoing Aspen payment card transition will (a) have all back-payments due from 24 May 2021 automatically paid in full and (b) not suffer over-payment claw-backs of emergency payments given as a consequence of the payment card transition.

Kevin Foster:

Weekly payments are continuously accruing on Aspen cards for eligible asylum seekers, even if they have not yet received or activated their new card. Once successfully activated, service users can access their accrued funds, therefore no back-payments will be required.

The vast majority of cards have been activated and payments were available for those without ASPEN access.

The position on emergency cash payments and reconciliation of balances will be reviewed in due course.

■ **Asylum: Napier Barracks**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[12317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were accommodated at Napier Barracks (a) in total and (b) in each dormitory at the site on 8 June 2021.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[12318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral answer on 7 June 2021, Official Report, column 664, if she will publish (a) a list of the wide range of covid-compliant measures that were taken at Napier barracks and (b) the dates on which those measures were implemented.

Kevin Foster:

The following covid-compliant measures have been implemented at Napier Barracks:

- 2 metres distance between beds since it opened.
- Strengthened cleaning regime in March.
- Personal cleaning equipment is provided to service users.
- 3 lateral flow tests a week from June having risen from 2 weekly lateral flow tests in April.

- Participant of Test and Trace.
- Staggered access to communal areas including the canteen since communal areas re-opened in May.
- Provision of hand sanitiser around the site since it opened.
- Signage on covid compliance around the site in various languages and pictogram.
- Reduction in overall capacity from 399 to 337 from April.

Due to the temporary and transient nature of Initial Accommodation, we publish stats which show how many asylum seekers are accommodated in each Local Authority, rather than by individual location:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2021>

■ Asylum: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [12341]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum inadmissibility decisions under Immigration Rules 345A have been issued to people in Northern Ireland since 1 January 2021.

Stephen Farry: [12343]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many removals from Northern Ireland have been progressed by the Third Country Unit since 1 January 2021.

Stephen Farry: [12344]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum removals from Northern Ireland were progressed by the Third Country Unit in 2020.

Stephen Farry: [12345]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many referrals have been made from Northern Ireland to the Third Country Unit for consideration for inadmissibility since 1 January 2021.

Chris Philp:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail inadmissibility decisions made as well as the number of returns. These can be found online at:

[How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to)

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates by area of the UK. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Stephen Farry: [12342]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims lodged in Northern Ireland have been allocated for substantive consideration since 1 January 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office are unable to state how many asylum claims lodged in Northern Ireland have been allocated for substantive considerations since 1 January 2021 as this information is not published.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. This data can be found at Asy_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2021/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement> of tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Home Office are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

■ British Nationality: Children**Ms Lyn Brown:****[10290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the proposals on entitlement to UK citizenship for children born in the UK recommended by the report entitled *We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The UK's Undocumented Population*, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

A child born in the UK to a British citizen or settled parent automatically becomes a British citizen. There are registration routes available for other children born in the UK to allow them to acquire this status.

We have no plans to amend the law in this respect.

■ Drugs: Misuse**Crispin Blunt:****[R] [11461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 May 2020 to Question 6165 on Drugs: Misuse, what the evidential basis is for suggestion that drug consumption clinics encourage drug use; what assessment she has made of the consistency of her policy on drug consumption clinics with the findings of the reports entitled (a) *Reducing opioid-related deaths in the UK*, published by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in December 2016 and (b) *What is the current evidence for the efficacy of drug consumption rooms?*, published by Public Health England in March 2019, that there was no evidence that drug consumption clinics increase drug use; and what her policy is on evidence-based approaches to reduce the health-related harms of drug misuse.

Kit Malthouse:

[Holding answer 10 June 2021]: Drug Consumption Rooms are not legal in the UK. A range of crimes would be committed in the course of running such a facility, by both

service users and staff, such as possession of a controlled drug, being concerned in the supply of a controlled drug, knowingly permitting the supply of a controlled drug on a premises or encouraging or assisting these and other offences.

The Government is aware of the differing views on Drug Consumption Rooms and that they are subject to much debate. We will give due consideration to any new evidence on the harms and benefits of Drug Consumption Rooms including the extent to which they condone or encourage drug use or otherwise.

We continue to support a range of evidence-based approaches to reduce the health-related harms of drug misuse, such as maintaining the availability of needle and syringe programmes to prevent blood borne infections and widening the availability of naloxone to prevent overdose deaths. Heroin assisted treatment is also an option open to local areas under the existing legal framework subject to obtaining the relevant licences from the Home Office.

The Government is focused on improving the quality of, and access to, drug treatment services to support individuals to recover and turn their lives around. That is why, on 20 January the Government announced £148 million of new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs. This package includes £80 million for drug treatment services across England, which represents the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years.

■ Electronic Surveillance: Human Rights

Grahame Morris:

[12108]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take in response to the recent European Court of Human Rights ruling in the case of Big Brother Watch and Others v the UK (application nos. 58170/13, 62322/14 and 24969/15) on the compatibility of the law covering bulk communications data interception and human rights law; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has one of the most robust and transparent oversight regimes for the protection of personal data and privacy anywhere in the world. This unprecedented transparency sets an international benchmark for how the law can protect both privacy and security whilst continuing to respond dynamically to an evolving threat picture.

This challenge concerned The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 which has now been replaced in large part by The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA).

We are pleased the Court recognised bulk interception is a vital tool that may be used by States to counter threats, including those relating to national security.

We are considering the judgment and the implications for the new regime under the IPA, working with stakeholders across government, and will be sending a formal response to the Court later this year.

■ Equipment: Licensing

Alyn Smith:

[\[10653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of licencing of pill presses.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office has not yet made a formal assessment of the potential benefits of regulating or licensing pill presses. We are engaging with the Scottish Government at ministerial and official level on this issue and with the National Crime Agency as well international partners.

We continue to review the evidence on the scale of the threat posed by organised crime gangs using pill press machinery in the UK and the options for addressing that threat.

■ Human Rights: Postgraduate Education

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[10403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government has allocated funding to the University of Huddersfield for the provision of that university's PhD in human rights; and whether that PhD course is planned to be reserved for Bahraini nationals.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not provide funding to the University of Huddersfield for the provision of a PhD in human rights in Bahrain and therefore holds no information on the detail of any courses.

■ Immigration

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[10289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the proposals on responsiveness to human circumstances in the immigration system recommended by the report entitled *We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The UK's Undocumented Population*, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Fairness is at the heart of Home Office's new plan for immigration. It is also at the heart of our response to the Windrush Lessons learned review where our Comprehensive Improvement Plan sets out a more compassionate approach which sees the "face behind the case".

Our ambition is to create a fundamental shift in the culture of the department to ensure the interests of the communities and individuals we serve underpin how we work every day. We have been improving our culture and the way we work, as well as changes to be made on, for example, the use of discretion, ethics, the burden of proof, our service standards and our approach to supporting vulnerable customers.

We are currently analysing the response to the consultation on the new plan for immigration and will be responding in full.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the proposals on routes to regularisation of immigration status recommended by the report entitled *We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The UK's Undocumented Population*, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

There are already several options available for those in the UK without lawful leave to regularise their status.

The Immigration Rules set out the requirements to be met to qualify for a right to remain which provides clarity for applicants and decision makers alike. There are also discretionary policies for leave to be granted outside the Immigration Rules in exceptional circumstances.

We welcome feedback and regularly engage with our partners and stakeholders on a wide range of issues, including regularisation of undocumented migrants. We note the recommendations made by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Marsha De Cordova: [\[12296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of extending the grace period for EU Settlement Scheme applications for EU citizens who need to make late applications.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[12297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing an alternative substantive approach to the EU Settlement Scheme deadline to ensure people who need to make late applications do so.

Kevin Foster:

There are no plans to extend the 30 June deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by those EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, or to extend the associated grace period during which existing EU law rights remain protected.

The Home Office has invested nearly £8 million in marketing campaigns to encourage EU citizens and their family members to apply to the scheme. We recently launched a new wave of UK advertising to ensure EU citizens and their family members are aware of the deadline and know they need to apply. We are also working closely with employers, local authorities and charities to raise awareness.

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, we have made clear where a person eligible for status under the scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

Non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for submitting a late application was published on 1 April. It includes where there are compelling practical or compassionate reasons why a person may have been unaware of the requirement to apply to the scheme by the deadline or may have failed to do so.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[12990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to amend Appendix EU to allow children to apply late to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[12991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the right to make late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme extended to children includes a right for their primary carers to also make a late application without giving further reasonable grounds.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, we have made clear where a person eligible for status under the EU Settlement Scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply. The Immigration Rules for the scheme in Appendix EU already make provision for this, including where children are concerned.

Non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for making a late application to the scheme was published on 1 April 2021. The guidance will underpin a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering late applications in light of the circumstances of each case. This will include where the basis for the applicant's eligibility for the scheme is as a child's primary carer.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[13152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of (a) postponing the EU Settlement Scheme deadline of 30 June 2021 or (b) automatically granting status to all those eligible.

Kevin Foster:

There are no plans to extend the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) or to introduce a declaratory system, under which EU citizens and their family members automatically acquired an immigration status and right to stay by Act of Parliament, but with no record of this taken.

The Home Office has invested nearly £8 million in marketing campaigns to encourage EU citizens and their family members to apply to the EUSS. We recently launched a new wave of UK advertising to ensure EU citizens and their family members are aware of the deadline and know they need to apply. We are also working closely with employers, local authorities and charities to raise awareness.

We have continued to receive and process thousands of applications a day to the EUSS throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 5.2 million applications concluded to 31 May 2021.

We are committed to making sure everybody eligible for the scheme can apply, including those who are vulnerable or need extra support. There is significant help available from a network of 72 organisations across the UK grant funded by the Home Office with £22 million to help vulnerable people apply to the EUSS, including after the 30 June 2021 deadline.

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, we have made clear where a person eligible for status under the scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply. Non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for submitting a late application was published on 1 April 2021, and includes compelling practical or compassionate reasons why a person may have been unaware of the requirement to apply to the EUSS by the deadline or may have failed to do so.

A declaratory system would cause confusion. Employers and service providers would struggle to identify those who benefit from residence rights under the Citizens' Rights Agreements from those moving to the UK after the end of the transition period who do not. This could lead to EU citizens and their family members who have made the UK their home struggling to prove their rights and entitlements here in the future which is not something we can allow to happen.

Fleur Anderson:

[13234]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many letters were sent to dual UK nationals in error telling them to apply to the EU settlement scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is using every possible channel to encourage everyone who may be eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to apply. The Home Office is currently working with HMRC and DWP to send letters to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who receive benefits, but it appears are yet to apply to the EUSS.

In trying to reach as many people as possible, there were a small number of instances where these letters were sent to recipients who are naturalised, or dual British and EEA citizens. The letter may also have been received by a small number of individuals who have already applied to the EUSS, for example because they applied after the initial exercise with DWP or HMRC was completed, but before the letter was sent out.

The letter made clear anyone who is a British citizen or already has EUSS status does not need to take any action.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong

Darren Jones:

[\[10564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how British National (Overseas) passport holders in Hong Kong can apply for residency in the UK once their British National (Overseas) passports have been relinquished as required by the Chinese government.

Kevin Foster:

China has made the decision to no longer recognise BN(O) passports as valid identity or travel documents. The UK continues to recognise valid BN(O) passports as valid travel and identity documents.

Those wishing to apply to the BN(O) route do not need to apply using their BN(O) passport and can apply using another valid identity document such as a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passport. Those applying for the route will need to be able to prove they hold BN(O) status and where an individual is unable to provide their BN(O) passport, eligibility checks can be made using historical records held by Her Majesty's Passport Office.

Those applying for the route do not need to travel to the UK on their BN(O) passport, but will need another valid travel document in order to travel from Hong Kong given the decision of the Chinese Government not to recognise them.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Spellar:

[\[11470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 23 March 2021 from the hon. Member for Warley regarding Ms Clovia Donegal.

Chris Philp:

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), MP Account Management Team responded on 8 June 2021

■ Migrants and Undocumented Workers

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[10292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies on (a) no recourse to public funds, (b) right to work checks and (c) the offence of illegal working under section 34 of the Immigration Act 2016, of the findings of the report entitled *We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The UK's Undocumented Population*, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) has been a long-standing condition applied to those staying here with temporary immigration status and those without lawful status in order to protect public funds. This reflects the need to maintain the confidence of

the general public migration to the UK is not based on access to public services and welfare benefits paid for by UK taxpayers.

The ability to work illegally is a key driver of illegal migration; it encourages people to break our immigration laws and provides the practical means for people to remain in the UK without status. It encourages people to take risks by putting their lives in the hands of unscrupulous people smugglers and leaves them vulnerable to exploitative employers. Right to work checks are an important part of our efforts to tackle illegal working.

We welcome feedback and regularly engage with stakeholders on a wide range of issues, including regularisation of undocumented migrants. We have therefore noted the recommendations made by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

■ Migrants: Detainees

Claire Hanna:

[\[13249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to investigate and review working practices where individuals are detained and processed for deportation despite having lodged a formal appeal of their recent immigration status decision.

Chris Philp:

We make every effort to ensure that a foreign national offenders removal by deportation coincides, as far as possible, with their release from prison on completion of sentence. Those who have no right to remain in the UK and do not return home voluntarily should be in no doubt of our determination to remove them.

Regular reviews of detention will consider if it remains appropriate and will take account of whether an appeal is a barrier to removal, or it is non-suspensive. The lodging of a suspensive appeal, or other legal proceedings that need to be resolved before removal can proceed will not lead to automatic release in such circumstances: there may be other grounds justifying a person's continued detention, for example a risk of absconding, risk of harm to the public or the person's removal may still legitimately be considered imminent if the appeal or other proceedings are likely to be resolved reasonably quickly.

Foreign national offenders held in detention have the option to apply to an independent immigration judge for bail at any point.

Our New Plan for Immigration will make it easier to deport foreign criminals with no right to be in the UK and keep our citizens safe.

■ Passports: British National (Overseas)

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[12091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to support BN(O) holders' children who cannot renew their passports through the Chinese embassy due to safety concerns.

Kevin Foster:

To apply for the Hong Kong BN(O) route, applicants must have a valid passport or other travel document which shows their identity and nationality.

Where applicants do not have a valid passport, they will need to submit an alternative, valid travel document which can be used to prove their identity and nationality. This means a document, other than a passport, which has been issued by the government of the UK or another state and which enables travel from one country to another, for example, a valid national identity card.

Mr Virendra Sharma:**[12092]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to (a) expand and (b) clarify the BN(O) scheme to ensure that people relying on their BN(O) passports as their travel documents are able to use those documents when travelling (i) internationally and (ii) to the UK.

Mr Virendra Sharma:**[12093]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a separate lifeboat scheme, mirroring Canadian-Australian arrangements, for 18-23 year old non-BN(O)s if they cannot apply for the BN(O) visa with their families.

Kevin Foster:

The Hong Kong BN(O) route is for those with BN(O) status and their eligible family members including adult children who were born after 1 July 1997 and who live with their parents. We do not currently have any plans to change these requirements.

Those not eligible for the BN(O) route can consider other UK immigration routes. For instance, individuals from Hong Kong can apply under the terms of the UK's new Points Based System, which will enable them to come to the UK in a wider range of professions and at a lower general salary threshold than in the past. There is also the existing youth mobility scheme which is open to those aged between 18 and 30 and offers a two-year grant of leave in the UK. There are 1,000 places currently available each year.

Those applying for the route do not need to travel to the UK on their BN(O) passport but will need another valid travel document in order to travel. This is set out on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa>

The UK will continue to recognise valid BN(O) passports as valid travel and identity documents.

■ Refugees**Jim Shannon:****[13063]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the New Plan for Immigration, if she will publish new safe and legal routes and resettlement targets for refugees seeking safety in the UK.

Chris Philp:

As set out in the New Plan for Immigration we will strengthen our safe and legal routes to the UK for refugees in need of protection, including refugee resettlement. Through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) we continue to welcome vulnerable refugees in need of protection to the UK as well as through other safe and legal routes such as Refugee Family Reunion. Since 2015 we have resettled over 25,000 refugees through our resettlement schemes, in addition to granting over 29,000 Refugee Family Reunion visas in the last 5 years. The number of refugees we resettle every year depends on a variety of factors including local authorities' capacity and the extent to which Community Sponsorship continues to thrive. This year, we continue to work closely with local authorities, community sponsor groups, and our international partners to enable refugee resettlement to continue as we recover from the pandemic.

Refugees: Resettlement**Alyn Smith:**[\[10651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her target number is for refugees to be resettled in the UK under the global UK Resettlement Scheme.

Chris Philp:

Through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) we continue to welcome vulnerable refugees in need of protection to the UK as well as through other safe and legal routes such as Refugee Family Reunion. Since 2015 we have resettled over 25,000 refugees through our resettlement schemes, in addition to granting over 29,000 Refugee Family Reunion visas in the last 5 years. The number of refugees we resettle every year depends on a variety of factors including local authorities' capacity for supporting refugees and the extent to which Community Sponsorship continues to thrive. This year the recovery from the pandemic will clearly be a significant factor affecting capacity. We have been working closely with our partners to assess the capacity for resettlement in the months ahead and will continue to welcome those in need in the years to come.

Retail Trade: Violence**Rachael Maskell:**[\[10499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the level of violence experienced by retail workers during the covid-19 outbreak in (a) York, (b) North Yorkshire and (c) England.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government recognises that the abuse and physical violence faced by shop staff can have a significant impact on their health, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. In response to the Government's Call for Evidence in 2019 the majority of respondents believed violence and abuse toward retail staff had increased in recent years.

While the consultation reflected the experiences of retailers and shopworkers before the pandemic, representatives of the sector on the National Retail Crime Steering Group have reported that retailers experienced an increase in incidents of abuse against their staff during the panic buying that occurred in March 2020, and during the subsequent months while social distancing measures were in place.

The Government's formal response to the Call for Evidence was published 7 July 2020 and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>

The Home Office is working closely with retailers and trade organisations through the National Retail Crime Steering Group. We have developed resources to assist retailers to report crimes when they occur, resources for shop staff who are victims of violence and abuse, and the #Shopkind communications campaign. The downloadable resources are free to use and are available here:

<https://brc.org.uk/nrcsg-against-shop-worker-abuse-and-violence/>

The next phase of the work will look at the causes of retail violence, such as drug and alcohol addiction, and what can be done to address these in the retail setting.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[10239]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist the hon. Member for West Lancashire in obtaining a response to her letter dated 9 April 2021 to the Director General of UK Visas and Immigration on a constituent's asylum application, reference ZA56228.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 7 June 2021.

Rosie Cooper:

[10242]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will assist the hon. Member for West Lancashire in obtaining a response to her letter dated 9 April 2021 to the Director General of UK Visas and Immigration on a constituent's asylum application, reference ZA56216.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 7 June 2021.

■ Visas

Ms Lyn Brown:

[10287]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the proposals on visa renewal processes recommended by the report entitled We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The

UK's Undocumented Population, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is committed to improving how we meet the differing needs of the public we serve, including by ensuring our systems and processes become as simple and straightforward as possible. All our fees are kept under review and we offer several fee waivers and exceptions from the need to pay an application fee.

Given a person's circumstances can change, we believe we have the right balance between the length of visas we issue and the need to check people still meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules. In addition, many visas are already aligned to a person's employment or their course of study and a renewal does not need to happen until a major change in their circumstances.

We are currently analysing responses to the consultation on the new plan for immigration and will be responding in full.

■ **Visas: Fees and Charges**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[10288]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting the proposals on costs of visa processes recommended by the report entitled We Are Here: Routes To Regularisation For The UK's Undocumented Population, published by The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in April 2021.

Kevin Foster:

When setting visa, immigration and citizenship fees the Home Office takes into account a number of factors set by Section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014. Full details of which can be reviewed at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>.

These include the cost of processing the application, the wider cost of running the migration, borders and citizenship system, international comparisons and the benefits which are likely to accrue from a successful application.

The Home Office provides exceptions to the need to pay application fees in several specific circumstances to ensure the Home Office's immigration and nationality fee structure complies with international obligations and wider government policy. Fee waivers are available on affordability grounds where the payment of a fee would be incompatible with an applicant's Convention, (ECHR) rights. Where the immigration application fee is waived on affordability grounds, the requirement to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge may also be waived. The detailed guidance can be found via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file967231/Revised_fee- waiver_guidance - FINAL.PDF

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Antisemitism****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[10195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the recent increase in antisemitic attacks.

Luke Hall:

There is no place in our society for antisemitism and we condemn it whole-heartedly. The Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government have published a joint letter in the Jewish Chronicle reassuring the Jewish Community of the Governments steadfast commitment to combatting antisemitism. This was accompanied by a visit to Golders Green and Finchley Road, with police and community representatives and we remain in dialogue with leaders of the Jewish community.

We are providing £14 million this year to the protective security grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings. We were also the first country to take the important step of adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism in 2016; and, following our encouragement, over three quarters of local councils have adopted the definition.

■ Building Safety Fund**Lucy Powell:**[\[12143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the £3.5 billion of funding for the Building Safety Fund announced by the Government on 10 February 2020, in which financial year that funding will be made available.

Christopher Pincher:

The announcement on 10 February of an additional £3.5 billion of funding to remediate unsafe cladding from high rise residential buildings provides assurance for residents that all eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund will be able to proceed. This funding will be made available from the current financial year.

Lucy Powell:[\[12144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the £3.5 billion of funding for the Building Safety Fund announced by the Government on 10 February 2020, what proportion of that funding will be available for grant funding; and what proportion will be allocated to staffing and other administrative costs.

Christopher Pincher:

The additional £3.5 billion of funding announced on 10 February will be pay for the remediation of unsafe cladding from all high rise residential buildings which have made eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund.

■ **Buildings: Insulation****Lucy Powell:**[\[12142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish data on the average cost of remediation of unsafe cladding per building for buildings (a) covered and (b) not covered by the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Statistics on the Building Safety Fund are published and updated monthly at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>

■ **Buildings: Safety****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[901099\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to improve building safety.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Bill announced in the Queen's speech is a comprehensive piece of legislation which will bring about a once in a generation change to building safety, and will ensure that people, homes, and buildings are safer in future, and that the right people are held to account.

It will introduce a new regulatory regime for high-rise buildings and for construction products and will drive the regulatory, cultural and behavioural changes needed to ensure people are safe in their homes and residents are at the heart of the new, robust system.

■ **Business Premises: Change of Use****Kim Johnson:**[\[901095\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on high street businesses of proposals for a new permitted development right to allow more premises to change to residential use.

Robert Jenrick:

Our new permitted development rights will boost our high streets and town centres, put vacant buildings back to use, and help to build the homes this country needs.

They will create jobs, deliver more housing, and create an easier and more flexible environment for businesses to set up and flourish. Previous permitted development right changes have already delivered over 72,000 new homes over the last 5 years to March 2020. And a survey last year showed three quarters of small and mid-sized

property builders expect to make use of the changes to Permitted Development Rights to deliver more housing units.

■ Crimes of Violence: Young People

Stella Creasy:

[\[901091\]](#)

What recent steps he has taken with Cabinet colleagues to ensure the availability of appropriate accommodation for people at risk of youth violence.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to supporting families with children at risk of going into care, at risk of violence or experiencing homelessness.

The legislation is clear that people who are vulnerable due to being at risk of violence to themselves, their family or household should receive priority need for homelessness assistance.

Councils should be offering homelessness assistance to young people or families in this situation and we would advise any young person in this situation to speak to their local council.

■ European Social Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Claire Hanna:

[\[13251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that organisations do not experience a lag in funding between the European Social Fund ending and the Shared Prosperity Fund commencing.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. We are working to ensure that there is a seamless transition from current EU structural funds to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the Heads of Terms. We will ramp up funding so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match EU receipts reaching around £1.5 billion a year. In addition, the UK Government is providing additional funding in 2021/22 through the UK Community Renewal Fund to help local areas prepare for the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

■ Evictions

Ian Lavery:

[\[10387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to provide additional support to tenants facing eviction following the end of the ban on bailiff-forced evictions came to an end on 31 May 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

As we gradually ease restrictions introduced during the coronavirus pandemic, the Government has to balance supporting tenants with landlords' ability to exercise their right to justice where needed.

The Government continues to provide support for tenants. A significant package of financial support is available to tenants to help them pay their rent. Local Housing Allowance rates were increased in April 2020 to the 30th percentile of market rents. In 2020/21 rates have been frozen in cash terms meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase applied in April 2020. We have also made £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding available, for local authorities to distribute to renters who require additional support. This is in addition to the wider support available through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 weekly uplift to Universal Credit, which are in place until the end of September.

Tenants continue to benefit from longer notice periods of four months in most cases, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements where needed. New arrangements have also been introduced to protect tenants where a possession claim is made to the court. These include requiring landlords to provide information about how their tenant has been affected by the pandemic, and a review stage to enable tenants to access legal advice. A new mediation pilot integrated into the court process is supporting landlords and renters who face court procedures and potential eviction to resolve issues and to help sustain tenancies where possible.

Evictions must be scheduled with a minimum of 14 days' notice and will not be carried out if bailiffs are made aware that a member of the household has COVID-19 symptoms or is self-isolating. In certain circumstances, tenants are able to apply to suspend an eviction, for example if a tenant missed the court hearing for a good reason and there would have been a good case for the possession order not to have been granted had they attended.

■ Evictions: Berkshire**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[13193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people potentially facing eviction notices in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire over the remainder of 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

There is no requirement on landlords to notify the Government when they serve notice of their intention to seek possession to their tenant. As such, the Department does not hold data of the number of people facing eviction notices in Slough and Berkshire.

In England, tenants currently benefit from longer notice periods, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements. As of 1 June, until at least 30 September,

landlords must give 4 months' notice of their intention to seek possession of a property, except in the most egregious cases.

Government support has also helped to ensure that the vast majority of tenants are up to date with their rent payments. The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping private renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

■ Facilities

Steve Reed:

[\[12149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to create a digital data repository, bringing together key data-sets relating to community facilities and their levels of use.

Luke Hall:

Community facilities are vital to maintaining the health of our local communities, and citizens should easily be able to identify what is available to them in their local area. Through the planning reforms, we will be looking to collect particular data that is classed as community facilities, for example open spaces such as parks and gardens. This data will be openly available to all who would like to view it on a map. Local authorities currently offer 'live' levels of occupancy for some of their most used facilities (e.g. swimming pools).

■ First Time Buyers

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[R\]](#) [\[10155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his policy is in the event that a developer cannot find sufficient purchasers to satisfy the First Homes policy.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not anticipate a lack of demand for First Homes - we are already receiving a very high level of interest in these homes since the launch of the first site in Bolsover, Derbyshire on 4 June.

However, our guidance for First Homes, published alongside the written ministerial statement on 24 May 2021, recommends that if a home remains unsold after a total of 6 months of marketing, despite making every reasonable effort to ensure the home is sold to a suitable person, the developer should be able to release the home onto the open market and pay the local authority a percentage of the sale price equal to

the proposed percentage discount. This will ensure that home do not remain unsold long term, whilst also ensuring developers still make the contributions required of them under the conditions of their planning permission.

Sir Gary Streeter:

[R] [\[10156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the 30 per cent discount of the First Homes policy is intended to replace the requirement for a deposit from the purchaser or whether a deposit is still required.

Christopher Pincher:

The discount is not intended to replace the deposit on a home but will make it significantly cheaper. We expect mortgage companies to be able to offer high loan-to-value mortgages on the discounted price of a First Home which, combined with the reduced cost of the home itself, could mean deposits are thousands of pounds cheaper than purchasing the same home on the open market.

■ **Green Belt: Greater London**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[10196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to protect Green Belt areas in outer London.

Christopher Pincher:

As set out in our manifesto, the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the Green Belt. Through national planning policy, we have put strong protections in place for Green Belt land, which should be reflected in the Local Plan for an area. A local authority can propose a Green Belt boundary change only in exceptional circumstances, and it must show that all other reasonable options for development have been explored. The authority needs to demonstrate that as much brownfield land has been used as possible, that density of development has been optimised, and that it has discussed whether neighbouring authorities can take some of the necessary development.

Most new building in Green Belt is inappropriate and should be refused planning permission unless there are very special circumstances. Protection of Green Belt land will continue under the reforms of the planning system currently under consideration. It will rightly continue to be for each local authority to plan for its area in consultation with local people and to apply national planning policy as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework. Due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, a duty of impartiality is in place and I cannot comment on specific local policies or decisions.

■ **Ground Rent**

Darren Jones:

[\[10563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to prevent leasehold management companies from

imposing five year ground rent review periods which limits the owner's ability to secure a mortgage.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are therefore taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

We know that high or increasing ground rents are a cause of considerable concern to affected leaseholders. We introduced the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rents) Bill into Parliament last month, which will prevent landlords from including a financial ground rent in new leases.

We also asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms (such as high and increasing ground rents) in the leasehold sector. On 19 March 2021, the CMA announced that it is requiring the removal of ground rent terms which it thinks are unfair from all existing Countryside and Taylor Wimpey contracts. The companies must also agree not to use the terms again in any future leasehold contracts. The Government strongly welcomes the CMA's efforts to bring justice to homeowners affected by unfair practices and continues to keep a close eye on the CMA investigation. We will consider any next steps once the CMA have progressed their enforcement action.

■ **Homes England**

Grahame Morris: [\[13028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the fire and rehire proposals tabled by senior managers in Homes England; and if he will make a statement.

Grahame Morris: [\[13029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he approved the recourse to fire and rehiring of staff if the unions and staff in Homes England did not accept the new pay proposals when agreeing to parts of the pay business case made by Homes England.

Grahame Morris: [\[13030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what date he became aware of proposals involving fire and rehiring of staff in Homes England; and whether he approved those measures.

Grahame Morris: [\[13031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 4 of the Civil Service management code: November 2016, whether Homes England is required to comply with the obligation set out in that code on submitting to his Department proposals or arrangements that are contentious; that it should submit to the Cabinet Office proposals or arrangements which are contentious;

and what assessment he has made of the equity of fire and rehire proposals for staff of Homes England.

Christopher Pincher:

On 3 March the Secretary of State approved Homes England's pay remit for 2020/21. This was a valuable award towards the maximum level allowable across the Public Sector. I am therefore confident that it will allow for the Agency to implement a new pay and grading structure which is based on the principle of ensuring pay equality for its staff. Homes England are at the early stages of what I am sure will be successful negotiations, conducted through normal process with staff and unions. Officials have been asked to support these negotiations to ensure that options for implementation are properly explored and that due process and guidance is followed.

■ **Housing Associations: Greater London**

Marsha De Cordova:

[10625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the affordability of housing association homes in London.

Christopher Pincher:

The Mayor has responsibility for housing delivery in London. However, the Government recognises the acute housing problems faced in London. We are providing the Mayor with £4 billion of Affordable Homes Programme funding over the 5 years 2021-2026 to deliver the affordable homes that London desperately needs, working with housing associations and local authorities he now needs to build them.

The Government does not prescribe a definition of affordability, but we recognise that the fundamental purpose of social housing is to provide affordable, safe and secure homes to those who cannot afford to rent or buy through the open market.

This purpose is reflected in the definition of affordable housing in the National Planning Policy Framework and in our approach to setting maximum rent levels in social housing including in London. The Regulator of Social Housing publishes annual statistics on rents charged by private registered providers of social housing (such as housing associations) - this is available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistical-data-return-statistical-releases>.

For those who cannot afford their rent, Housing Benefit or Universal Credit is available to provide support with housing costs.

Marsha De Cordova:

[10626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a right to buy scheme for housing association tenants in London.

Christopher Pincher:

The Midlands pilot of the Voluntary Right to Buy was launched in August 2018. Over 9,000 households registered for the ballot in August 2018, and 6,000 tenants were given the opportunity to apply to their housing association

The Midlands pilot tested key aspects of the voluntary agreement with housing associations not tested in the initial small-scale pilot, including the portable discount and one for one replacement

To date, there has been a total of 1,836 sales across 55 housing associations. The pilot is now in its final stages, with a handful of sales still to complete, and we are considering the next steps on Voluntary Right to Buy.

Housing: Construction**Mark Menzies:**[\[10334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that appropriate upgrades to (a) roads and (b) pedestrian access are made in areas with new housing developments.

Christopher Pincher:

Our National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that in assessing sites where development is proposed, that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. The Framework is also clear that any significant implications of the development for the wider transport network, or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. Where appropriate, developer contributions may be sought to achieve improvements that help mitigate any implications.

Last year the Government consulted on the Planning for the Future White Paper, and the reforms will consider how more specific sustainable transport options can be delivered to reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive modes of transport, such as prioritising walking and cycling.

Housing: Floods**Mark Menzies:**[\[10335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of homes damaged by flooding issues in the last twelve months.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG does not hold estimates of the number of homes damaged by flooding over the past twelve months.

■ Housing: Insulation

Julian Sturdy:

[10366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the value of wool as a thermal insulator in the construction of new environmentally-friendly homes.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to meeting its target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how we expect the planning system to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. In their development plan policies, local planning authorities can encourage the use of sustainable materials like wool in new development

We have not made any assessment of the value of wool as a thermal insulator. The Building Regulations are generally couched in performance terms and do not prescribe the technologies, materials or fuels to be used, allowing builders the flexibility to innovate and select the most practical and cost-effective solutions in particular circumstances. Developers are able to use wool products in construction projects where it is safe to do so and where it can be shown to meet all applicable Building Regulations requirements.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Christian Matheson:

[10425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the (a) selection criteria, (b) assessment criteria and (c) scoring system for the assessment of applications for the first round of the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

We have published the following on gov.uk at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-additional-documents>.

The methodology used to calculate the index of places set out in the prospectus, a technical note setting out further guidance on eligibility, MP support and the application and assessment process for the first round of the Levelling Up Fund.

Alun Cairns:

[901087]

What recent assessment he has made of the opportunities to bid for levelling up funding.

Robert Jenrick:

Levelling up all four nations of our United Kingdom remains at the centre of this Government's mission – and in particular my Department as MHCLG becomes a UK-wide Department again. Our £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. And only a fortnight ago I was delighted to visit Wales and hear from local leaders

about their exciting ambitions for their local areas, and take in the sites including Treorchy High Street – the current reigning Great British High Streets Champion.

■ Local Government Finance

Steve Reed: [\[12147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to proceed with the Fair Funding Review.

Luke Hall:

The department took a decision not to proceed with implementing the Review of Relative Needs and Resources in 2021-22 in order that councils and central government alike could focus on meeting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the immediate public health challenges have passed, the government and the sector will work together to consider the appropriateness of the reforms previously proposed. Final decisions on the way forward for local government finance reform will be taken at the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Rachel Hopkins: [\[901098\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the role of local authorities in helping to prevent outbreaks of covid-19.

Luke Hall:

The Secretary of State and I have regular discussions with our ministerial colleagues regarding local authorities' role in the COVID-19 response, and our department and Government work closely with local authorities to help strengthen local-national partnerships in helping to prevent outbreaks of COVID-19.

■ Local Government: Ethics

Steve Reed: [\[12145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken in response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's review into Local Government Ethical Standards.

Luke Hall:

The Committee on Standards in Public Life report of their review recommends some strengthening of the local government standards and conduct system with numerous legislative changes and amendments. Of the 26 recommendations, 22 were aimed at Government and we have been considering these carefully. I will be issuing the Government response to the report in due course.

■ Members: Correspondence

Matthew Pennycook: [\[13153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter of 19 April 2021 from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich on his constituent's application to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

My Noble Friend Lord Greenhalgh responded to the Hon Member's letter on 10 June.

■ Planning Permission

Ruth Cadbury: [\[12155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure, if he will publish the number of responses to that consultation that supported the proposal for a fee that was higher than £100 for prior approval applications through permitted development.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[12156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the introduction of a £96 fee for applications for prior approval through permitted development on the finances of local planning authorities.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[12157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what representations he has received from local authorities on the adequate level of a fee for applications for prior approval through permitted development.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[12158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of local authorities on the introduction of a fee for prior approval applications through permitted development.

Christopher Pincher:

Responses to the consultation recognised the need for local authorities to consider any implications of the permitted development right by way of a prior approval application. This will require local planning authority resources and should therefore be subject to an appropriate fee.

We aim to publish an Impact Assessment on the measures as soon as possible in accordance with the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015. It will be a full regulatory Impact Assessment.

■ Planning: Nature Conservation

Munira Wilson:

[\[901093\]](#)

Whether it is his policy that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be given consideration by local authorities in all planning decisions.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[901110\]](#)

Whether it is his policy that Local Nature Recovery Strategies should be given consideration by local authorities in all planning decisions.

Christopher Pincher:

The Environment Bill currently before Parliament provides for a strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This strengthened duty includes a requirement to have regard to relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Our planning reforms will reinforce the implementation of these measures, to capitalise on the potential of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and biodiversity net gain as we seek to make the system clearer and more positive.

■ Planning: Reform

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[10467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish in full the membership of all working groups convened by the Government to develop its proposals for changes to the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

Since the close of the 'Planning for the Future' consultation, we have continued to hear from a range of representatives from across the planning sector as we continue to develop and refine our ideas for reform. We look forward to continuing to engage with a wide range of interests as we take the programme forward.

We will publish a response to the consultation setting out our next steps which will provide a basis for further engagement with the sector.

■ Public Lavatories: Disability

Rushanara Ali:

[\[10385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the announcement by his Department on 4 March 2021 of funding for accessible toilets under the Changing Places scheme, when his Department plans to provide further information on the application process for that funding.

Luke Hall:

District and Unitary Authorities in England will receive full details of how they can access this funding soon. Local authorities will be invited to 'opt in' to receive a proportion of this £30 million funding to install facilities in their communities and boost the number of Changing Place toilets in existing buildings.

This programme will be delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK who will be supporting local authorities in their delivery and are undertaking the largest consultation to date with users of Changing Places toilets in England to help develop our understanding of user needs and priorities.

In the meantime, local authorities are encouraged to consider where Changing Places toilets are most needed in their communities and are encouraged to begin identifying and working in partnership with other organisations who may help to deliver these facilities.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Douglas Chapman:

[\[901104\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on his Department's role in delivering the Government's levelling up agenda.

Luke Hall:

My Department is playing a key role in levelling up, including supporting our towns and cities to recover and thrive post-Covid, to regenerate our high streets, and to ensure all places have the capacity and capability to level up.

We are working closely with colleagues across Government to deliver our shared priorities on levelling up.

■ Rents: Arrears

Ian Lavery:

[\[10386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate is Department has made of the number of people in Wansbeck in rent arrears after the end of the ban on bailiff-forced evictions on 31 May 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

We do not hold data on the number of people in rent arrears in Wansbeck following 31 May 2021.

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to support tenants with living costs. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps is he taking to support individuals in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[901096\]](#)

What support he is providing to people in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Afzal Khan:

[\[901101\]](#)

What support he is providing to people in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Norris:

[\[901105\]](#)

What support he is providing to people in rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of support to renters, and it has made a real impact. The vast majority - 91% - of renters are up to date with their rent.

However, we have kept in place longer notice periods of four months until the end of September, giving people who need it the time to agree a way forward with their landlord.

For renters who require additional support, financial measures remain in place. We have made available £140 million this year for local councils to help people pay their rent through Discretionary Housing Payments, and we extended the Job Retention Scheme and the £20 weekly uplift in Universal Credit until the end of September.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[13194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support people in rent arrears as a result of consequences emerging from the covid-19 pandemic from being evicted.

Eddie Hughes:

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

Renters will continue to benefit from longer notice periods, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements. As of 1 June, until at least 30 September, notice periods will be at least 4 months except in the most egregious cases.

■ Sleeping Rough

Ben Everitt:

[\[901090\]](#)

What steps he is taking to provide accommodation for rough sleepers.

Eddie Hughes:

By the start of this year, this Government supported over 37,000 people as part of our Everyone In initiative during the pandemic, with over 26,000 already being moved into longer term accommodation.

At the Spending Review in November we committed an additional £254 million of resource funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This takes resource funding in 2021-22 to £676 million - a 60% increase compared to what was announced at Spending Review 2019.

In addition, the Government has accelerated the delivery of the £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to deliver 6,000 move-on homes and support - the largest ever investment in move-on accommodation.

■ Towns Fund: Shrewsbury

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[12089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to evaluate and support Shrewsbury to receive funding from the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Towns Fund, which comprises Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF), will drive the economic regeneration of towns and high streets across England to deliver long-term economic and productivity growth. The Levelling Up Fund builds on this, making £4.8 billion available to ensure more places, like Shrewsbury, can benefit from investment in local infrastructure that will improve our towns and high streets and drive long-term economic growth.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Claire Hanna:

[\[13250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the go live date is of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

The Government will set out further details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in a UK-wide investment framework published later this year and the profile will be confirmed at the next Spending Review.

■ **Urban Areas: Public Lavatories**

Damien Moore:

[\[10618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to provide more accessible toilets in town centres.

Luke Hall:

Public toilets are a valuable community amenity that allow all members of the community to access vital services in our towns and high streets. This Government recognises the important role they play and as a result, has provided a broad range of support to not only maintain access to these vital facilities throughout the pandemic but is also taking steps to increase provision of accessible, Changing Places toilets.

At Budget 2018, we offered 100 per cent business rates relief for public toilets across England supporting local authorities, in their responsibility for opening, maintaining and overseeing toilet provision in their area.

As we begin to return to normality following COVID-19 restrictions, the Government has further supported local authorities to increase toilet provision and support repair, maintenance and enhanced cleaning regimes through the £56 million Welcome Back Fund. This funding is available to all areas of the Country and has helped to ensure a safe and successful return to our high streets and town centres.

In addition, we are soon to launch the £30 million Changing Places programme. Delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, this programme will substantially increase the provision of Changing Places accessible toilets in existing buildings across England, allowing people who need these facilities to get out and about, and enjoy the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Agricultural Products: Australia**

Ben Lake:

[\[10567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential cumulative effect on UK emissions of providing (a) duty-free and (b) tariff-free access to agricultural goods from Australia.

Greg Hands:

The Government has always been clear that any free trade agreement it signs will not threaten the UK's ability to meet its environmental commitments or its membership of international environmental agreements. The Government is seeking a deal with Australia that will further environmental and climate policy priorities and the UK will not compromise on high environmental protection.

The Government carried out a public consultation and scoping assessment for its free trade agreement negotiation with Australia, which can be found on the Government's website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-approach-to-negotiating-a-free-trade-agreement-with-australia/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-the-uks-strategic-approach>). This preliminary scoping assessment considered illustrative scenarios. Following the conclusion of negotiations, a full impact assessment will be published prior to implementation.

■ Arms Trade: Trade Fairs

Caroline Lucas: [12105]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether Defence and Security Equipment International event organisers Clarion have negotiated with the government to secure covid-19 quarantine exemptions for attendees of the Defence and Security Equipment International 2021.

Graham Stuart:

The Government will not be able to grant a large-scale exemption for attendees at Defence and Security Equipment International 2021.

■ Exports: Government Assistance

Bill Esterson: [12114]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many businesses have received support through the General Export Facility.

Graham Stuart:

To date, UK Export Finance (UKEF) has approved 19 applications from 18 exporters for support through the General Export Facility (GEF). UKEF is currently considering for approval a further three applications for GEF support.

■ India: Foreign Companies

Paul Bristow: [12319]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what representations she has made to her Indian counterpart on the Indian Government's non-compliance with international arbitration rulings in respect of (a) Cairn Energy, (b) Vodafone and (c) Devas Multimedia; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

It is a long-standing position of HM Government not to engage in ongoing legal proceedings under bilateral investment treaties (BITs) that we are not party to. Enforcement of an award made in favour of an investor by an international arbitral tribunal is a question for the investor, based on the options available to them under international law and relevant domestic legal procedures.

■ India: Trade Agreements

Paul Bristow:

[\[12320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to review the efficacy of provisions in the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty relating to independent international arbitration panels as a means of dispute resolution; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government has no plans to review the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provision in the United Kingdom-India Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). The BIT was unilaterally terminated in 2017, following notice of termination provided by the Government of India in 2016. The BIT contains a sunset clause, under which the provisions of the treaty, including the ISDS provision, continue to apply to investments made before its termination for a further 15 years.

■ Intellectual Property

Bill Esterson:

[\[12113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent representations has she received from relevant stakeholders on the harmonisation of intellectual property through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Greg Hands:

The UK's intellectual property regime achieves an effective balance between rewarding creators and innovation and reflecting wider public interests. Any future trade deal negotiated by the UK will seek to be consistent with the UK's membership of international intellectual property conventions that the UK are party to.

The Government has already carried out a public consultation on UK accession to this Agreement. The Government will publish its consultation response alongside its outline approach and economic impact assessment in advance of accession negotiations.

■ Overseas Investment: India

Paul Bristow:

[\[12322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the additional UK investment in India which will result from a UK-India free trade agreement; and will she make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom has a strong investment relationship with India with around 400,000 jobs supported through investments in each other's economies. In 2019, investment from the United Kingdom in India was worth £15.3 billion, a rise of over £800 million from 2018. At a virtual summit in May between my Rt hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Modi of India, Britain announced her intent to negotiate a comprehensive free trade agreement with India. For British businesses

investing in India's £2 trillion economy, or Indian businesses investing across the United Kingdom, a free trade agreement could offer improved access. On 25th May, my Department launched a consultation requesting input from consumers and businesses across all sectors that will help us craft a deal that boosts economic growth creating high-value jobs in every corner of the country.

■ Overseas Trade: Taiwan

Mrs Heather Wheeler: [\[13928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to expand the UK's trade and investment relationship with Taiwan.

Greg Hands:

I refer my hon. Friend for South Derbyshire to the answer I gave to my Rt hon. Friend for Haltemprice and Howden on 14 June 2021, UIN: 12938

■ Trade Agreements

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [\[13118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7th June 2021 to Question 8649 on Trade Agreements, what impact, if any, sanctions placed upon Members of the UK Parliament by the People's Republic of China have had on trade policy.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Prime Minister has made clear that the freedom of Parliamentarians to speak out in opposition to violations of rights and responsibilities is fundamental, and that is why HM Government stands firmly with all those who have been sanctioned.

Our approach to China is rooted in our values and interests. We want a mutually beneficial trading relationship, but we will not sacrifice our values, and we have no plans to negotiate a trade deal with China.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Ben Lake: [\[10565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of a free trade agreement with Australia on (a) Ceredigion and (b) Wales.

Greg Hands:

The economic analysis, published on 17 June 2020, seeks to identify the potential scale of the long-term additional benefit to the UK from having a deal with Australia.

This deal is for the whole union. The Department for International Trade's (DIT) Scoping Assessment found that Wales benefits in all modelled scenarios. Top Welsh goods exports to Australia, including medicinal and pharmaceutical products, currently face tariffs of up to 5%, and will benefit from the liberalisation of tariffs on

these products. Welsh foods and drinks producers will also benefit from the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

DIT is establishing a trade hub in Wales as part of a new strategy to boost exports and bring the benefits of the government's global trade policy to the whole of the UK. Providing exporters with a direct feed into UK trade policy, to take better advantage of opportunities in fast-growing markets like the Indo-Pacific region.

Ben Lake:

[\[10566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of a free trade agreement with Australia on farmers and food producers in Wales.

Greg Hands:

The economic analysis, published on 17 June 2020, seeks to identify the potential scale of the long-term additional benefit to the UK from having a deal with Australia.

This deal is for the whole union. The Department for International Trade's (DIT) Scoping Assessment found that Wales benefits in all modelled scenarios. Welsh foods and drinks producers will benefit from the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers. Any deal the Government signs with Australia will include protections for the agriculture industry and will not undercut UK farmers or compromise high standards.

DIT is establishing a trade hub in Wales as part of a new strategy to boost exports and bring the benefits of the Government's global trade policy to the whole of the UK. Providing exporters with a direct feed into UK trade policy, to take better advantage of opportunities in fast-growing markets like the Indo-Pacific region.

Claire Hanna:

[\[13248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with the Northern Ireland Executive and devolved regions on the implications of the proposed UK-Australian trade deal.

Greg Hands:

Engagement on the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement is taking place with all parts of the UK at all levels. Officials from the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland receive regular updates from the negotiation team, on top of being involved in technical policy discussions.

The Department for International Trade has created engagement structures at all levels to ensure a constructive approach to working with the Devolved Administrations. These include the quarterly Ministerial Forum for Trade, regular bilateral Ministerial meetings, the six-weekly Senior Officials Group, Chief Negotiator calls running parallel to negotiation rounds, six-weekly chapter-specific policy roundtables, and regular working level engagement throughout the sprint. The programme of engagement totals hundreds of hours at official level and dozens at Ministerial level.

In the negotiations, the Government is acting on behalf of the whole UK family and the overall principle is to ensure all parts of the UK benefit from any deal - including Northern Ireland, which could benefit from tariff liberalisation on specialised machinery, for example. The Government has engaged extensively with the Devolved Administrations on all trade policy issues, including the formulation of trade negotiation positions.

■ Trade Agreements: Dispute Resolution

Drew Hendry: [\[13120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether (a) legal costs and (b) compensatory payments resulting from investor-state dispute settlement claims relating to acts by the Scottish Government would be passed on to the Scottish Government; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom has never been successfully taken to tribunal under her over 90 bilateral investment treaties, nor as a party to the Energy Charter Treaty. HM Government has a strong record of creating an open environment for both domestic and foreign investors, and treating them fairly. We will continue to do so.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the HM Government and devolved administrations across the country continues to apply. The Memorandum sets out that a devolved administration would only be responsible for the payment of legal costs or awards made by the tribunal to the extent that they arise from its failure to implement or enforce an obligation.

■ Trade Agreements: Musicians

Catherine West: [\[13157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the new trade deal agreed with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein includes Mode 4 provisions that allow musicians and other performing artists and their crews to undertake professional work on a reciprocal basis.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The new trade deal agreed in principle with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein includes provisions for British musicians and performers, who will be able to perform in all three countries, and tour in Norway for up to 90 days every six months without a permit.

■ Trade Agreements: Taiwan

Mr David Davis: [\[12938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans her Department has to open trade negotiations with Taiwan.

Greg Hands:

The UK remains committed to strengthening its rich and wide-ranging trading relationship with Taiwan. Total trade in goods and services between the UK and Taiwan was £6.1 billion in 2020. The UK is working with Taiwan to deepen its relationship, including through the annual Trade Talks and associated dialogues, ministerial engagement, and through engagements by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Taiwan.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission**Caroline Lucas:**[\[13024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when the new Trade and Agriculture Commission will be established; and when the Government plans to respond to the recommendations made by in Interim Trade and Agriculture Commission's Final Report published in March 2021.

Greg Hands:

On 7 June, the Department for International Trade (DIT) launched a call for expressions of interest for expert advisors to join the new Trade and Agriculture Commission. The Commission will be established in time to scrutinise the planned free trade agreement with Australia, to inform parliamentary scrutiny following signature.

DIT officials have been working closely with Whitehall Departments on the Government's response to each of the 22 recommendations in the original Trade and Agriculture Commission's report. The Government will publish the response as soon as it is ready.

■ White Fish: Norway**Dave Doogan:**[\[13222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what terms have been agreed in the free trade agreement between the UK and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein on UK sales of cod to Norway.

Dave Doogan:[\[13223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the value of UK cod sales to Norway was in the most recent period for which that information is available; and what tariff will be imposed on future such sales under the terms of the new free trade agreement recently agreed between the UK and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein provide a preferential rate of 0% for cod imports from Britain. In 2020, we exported approximately £1 million (382 tons) of cod to Norway. British exporters of cod will not face tariff barriers in future trade with any of these countries.

■ Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[13119]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what measures are in place to ensure that her Department adheres to sanctions placed on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) by the Government under the Global Human Rights Regulations.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Under the Global Human Rights Regulations, British businesses must comply with sanctions against the individuals and entities appearing on a regularly updated GOV.UK list. Businesses continue to be notified about sanctions and designated persons too.

On 22nd March, HM Government took the significant step of imposing asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese officials as well as the Public Security Bureau of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps responsible for the serious violations of rights and responsibilities that take place in Xinjiang.

The United Kingdom will continue to work alongside its international partners to send the clearest possible signal of the international community's serious concern and our collective willingness to act on this issue.

JUSTICE

■ Berwyn Prison: Crimes of Violence

Liz Saville Roberts:

[13155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of violent incidences by type of incident that have occurred at HMP Berwyn in each month since March 2020.

Alex Chalk:

We routinely publish figures for assaults by establishment as part of the Safety in Custody statistics. These statistical bulletins include breakdowns (at prison level) for prisoner-on-prisoner assault and prisoner-on-staff assault, including by serious assaults. They are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-december-2020>

■ Berwyn Prison: Safety

Liz Saville Roberts:

[13154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of adequacy of levels of physical safety among (a) prisoners and (b) staff at HMP Berwyn.

Alex Chalk:

Ensuring the safety of staff and prisoners is a key priority and we continue to prioritise giving all staff the tools and training needed to help them to improve safety outcomes.

HMP Berwyn has continued to support the delivery of safer prisons work throughout the pandemic. This has included launching an intervention programme to address violence for prisoners involved in a number of violent incidents; introducing a new debt strategy with an appointed debt team; and the introduction of a new peer support process to provide support for prisoners to help reduce the risk of self-harm and violence.

HMP Berwyn rolled out 'Purple Video Visits' during the pandemic, helping to maintain important family ties – which is vital to rehabilitation. The prison also developed distraction packs to keep prisoners better occupied and support their wellbeing.

Crimes against the Person: Sentencing**Philip Davies:****[10278]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in each of the last five years what the average immediate custodial sentence was for (a) each offence in the violence against the person category; (b) burglary; (c) robbery and (d) possession of weapons.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on convictions and sentencing outcomes up to December 2020, available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

In the PivotTable Fields, remove the 'Values' variable from the 'Rows' field and replace with 'Offence'. Then, drag the 'Average custodial sentence length (months)' variable into the 'Values' field. Use the 'Offence group' filter to select (a) '01: Violence against the person', (b) '04: Theft Offences', (c) 'Robbery' and (d) '07: Possession of weapons'.

Philip Davies:**[10279]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of offenders convicted of (a) each offence in the violence against the person category; (b) burglary; (c) robbery and (d) possession of weapons were not given a sentence of immediate custody in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on convictions and sentencing outcomes up to December 2020, available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

Use the 'Offence group' filter to select (a) '01: Violence against the person', (b) '04: Theft Offences', (c) '03: Robbery' and (d) '07: Possession of weapons'. In order to

identify the number of offenders sentenced who did not receive an immediate custodial sentence, subtract the values of Row 35 (Total immediate custody) from the respective values of Row 25 (Sentenced).

■ Dangerous Driving: Sentencing

Taiwo Owatemi: [10677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to increase sentences for people who cause death by careless driving while not under the influence of drink or drugs.

Chris Philp:

The government keeps offences and penalties under review. We have no current plans to increase the maximum penalty for causing death by careless driving.

■ Emergency Services: Crimes of Violence

Philip Davies: [10273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people convicted of assaulting an emergency worker have been given an immediate custodial sentence of longer than six months since that offence was introduced.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on convictions and sentencing outcomes up to December 2020, available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

In the 'Offence' filter, select '8.22 Assault of an emergency worker'. Number of defendants convicted will populate Row 24, and those sentenced to immediate custody will populate Row 35. The number of defendants who received sentence lengths greater than 6 months will populate Rows 60 to 77.

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Justin Madders: [10458]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) work related activity component face to face tribunals are waiting for hearings to be listed.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not held centrally.

First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) data are published at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

The latest period for which a full data set about SSCS is available is March 2020. The most recent tribunal statistics (for the period up until December 2020) do not include some SSCS data due to issues identified as the Tribunal was being migrated to a

new operational system. This data will be made available as soon as this is resolved and the data quality assured.

The decision as to how a hearing is conducted is a matter for the judge, who will determine how best to uphold the interests of justice.

Throughout the pandemic, appeals continued to be decided on paper, or heard using telephone, and other remote technology. HMCTS introduced safety measures so that face to face hearings could be held for any cases which could not be decided on paper or heard remotely.

■ High Security Hospitals and Prisons: Mental Health

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[10300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the report entitled Working in UK Prisons and Secure Hospitals During the COVID-19 Pandemic, published in May 2021 by the Centre for the Study of Emotion and Law at Royal Holloway University of London.

Alex Chalk:

The Royal Holloway University's report has rightly recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic has created an incredibly challenging working environment for prison staff. Ensuring that all staff that work in our prisons are well supported and able to thrive at work has long been, and remains, a high priority for the Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

On 21 March 2021, the Government published its COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan, which sets out a range of ambitious policies that seek to address the mental health impacts linked to the pandemic felt across all sections of society. Within the plan, HMPPS outlined some new interventions and services it has put in place to support staff. This includes increasing access to proactive support from qualified counsellors to help staff recognise and address any adverse wellbeing or mental ill health effects due to the challenges of their role during the pandemic.

We have also trained over 1000 Mental Health Allies across HMPPS who provide peer support at a local level and maintained access to a 24-hour confidential counselling helpline.

■ Judiciary: Retirement

Philip Davies:

[\[10274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason it is proposed to average over a 10-year period the raising of the judicial mandatory retirement age from 70 to 75; and how that averaging is planned to be implemented.

Chris Philp:

The Impact Assessment and Equality Statement, published in 2020 as part of the Judicial Mandatory Retirement Age (MRA) consultation, outlined our assessment of the potential effects of raising the MRA. Analysis of retirement trends suggested that

with an MRA of 75, the number of judges and non-legal members in post could be around 400 higher than if the MRA had remained at 70. For magistrates, this figure was 2,000. These estimates were calculated as an average over a 10-year period.

The government intends to legislate to raise the MRA to 75 through the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill, to be introduced shortly. When the MRA is changed to 75, it will immediately apply to all judicial office holders who are in office on the date that the legislative measure is commenced. The legislation will include a transitional provision to enable retired magistrates who are younger than the new MRA to apply to return to the bench, subject to business need.

■ North Sea Camp Prison: Telephone Services

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report on a scrutiny visit to HMP North Sea Camp by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 2 June 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that telephone call monitoring for public protection purposes at HMP North Sea Camp is robust.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to report on a scrutiny visit to HMP North Sea Camp by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 2 June 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that there are enough suitable places in approved premises to ensure that prisoners who require this as part of their parole conditions are released without delay.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Report on a scrutiny visit to HMP North Sea Camp by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 2 June 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that all prisons in England and Wales develop comprehensive equalities strategies.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to report on a scrutiny visit to HMP North Sea Camp by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 2 June 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that offender management unit support is of high quality at HMP North Sea Camp.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice welcomes HMIP's scrutiny visit report, published on 2 June, and takes the concerns raised seriously. The Inspectorate found improvements over the course of the pandemic and since their last report, but we recognise there is more to do.

We remain committed to the expansion of Approved Premises through the delivery of an additional 200 bed placements. The Approved Premise Expansion Programme (APEX) has delivered 56 bed spaces to date and we have further bed spaces confirmed for this financial year, which includes a new site for women in Bristol. The

Programme is continuing to progress additional sites and we are confident in achieving the 200 placement target.

All prisons in England and Wales are expected to have Equality Strategies and Action Plans, as specified within [PSI 2011-32](#) – Ensuring Equality, and this document will be updated in the coming months providing further guidance to this requirement. HMP North Sea Camp is working with the National Equalities Team to develop an overarching Equalities strategy that both supports and is supportive of the needs of those in the charge of HMPPS.

We are committed to making all our prisons decent and safe for all those who live and work there. Further easing of the restrictions will enable us to work on embedding additional improvements. We will continue to ensure that action is taken to improve conditions for those in our prisons and their outcomes on release.

■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Retail Trade**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[10662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if the Government will support amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to strengthen protections for shopworkers.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises that the violence and abuse faced by retail workers can have a significant impact. It also understands that the pandemic has resulted in some shop workers feeling more vulnerable and susceptible to adverse societal behaviours and at an increased risk of harm from members of the public. The Government is clear that no worker should be made to suffer such abuse or violence in providing a service to the public – it is wholly unacceptable.

We therefore understand the motivations behind the campaigns to create a new assault offence for retail workers but there are already a wide range of offences which exist, and which cover assaults against any worker, including shop workers. In all cases, the fact that an offence has been committed against a person serving the public will be considered as an aggravating factor for the purpose of passing sentence.

The Government is committed to keeping our retail environments safe by driving down violence and abuse towards shop staff and this is being tackled by other means. That is why we are working with retail stakeholders through the Home Office led National Retail Crime Steering Group chaired by the Minister for Crime and Policing and the British Retail consortium to ensure the response to these crimes is as robust as it possibly can be. We are taking necessary steps to ensure that abuse and violence towards retail workers are reported to the police by victims and/or their employers. We believe these practical steps will offer a more direct and robust solution in the longer term.

We are also aware that two amendments have been tabled to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. For now, we remain unpersuaded of the necessity of a

new criminal offence to deal with assaults against retail workers. But we will continue to keep the matter under review and listen to the debate on this matter.

■ **Prisoners: Taxation**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on reoffending of tax debts accrued as a result of lack of effective communication with HMRC after a person is taken into custody.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve (a) communication with HMRC for prisoners and (b) awareness of tax matters affecting prisoners within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a scheme whereby HMRC would be automatically informed of (a) a prisoner's change of address and (b) any automatic change in a prisoner's employment status when they are taken into custody.

Alex Chalk:

We do not hold data on the reoffending impact of tax debts accrued as a result of a lack of effective communication with HMRC after a person is taken into custody. We are aware anecdotally, however, of problem debt among the prison population and of a possible relationship between debt and further offending. This includes both licit debts owed to creditors and illicit debts owed to criminals in custody and the community.

Currently, under the enhanced Through The Gate (eTTG) specification, the Basic Custody Screening Tool assessment is completed at reception. If that assessment identifies a need around tax, resettlement staff can facilitate a call between the prisoner and HMRC. This support will continue after the launch of the new, unified probation service on 26 June this year, although probation regions may arrange those services in different ways or draw on support from specialist providers.

There is also good work being done in a number of prisons by organisations such as RIFT Social Enterprise, which helps prisoners understand their tax affairs and claim tax refunds.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Abortion: Northern Ireland****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[12992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many women have travelled to the British mainland to receive abortion care since the establishment of a legal framework for abortion in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Department of Health and Social Care has now published the 2020 statistics on abortion in England and Wales. In 2020, there were 371 abortions in England and Wales for women from Northern Ireland.

I would note that over 1,100 women and girls have been able to access local abortion services since April last year - and this should not be overlooked at a time where the services have not been formally commissioned. It is, however, very distressing to hear that even throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, some women and girls have still been forced to travel, at a time where it is even more crucial for local access to healthcare to be available. I put on record my thanks to the medical professionals who have ensured that women and girls have had some access to abortion services in Northern Ireland to date, and the organisations that have supported this work.

However, progress must be made towards properly commissioning services so that safe, local abortion services are fully available as a healthcare service in Northern Ireland. The current situation is not acceptable. If there continues to be no progress, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will issue a direction using his powers under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, to ensure that services are commissioned and delivered according to the 2018 Report of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Dame Diana Johnson:[\[12993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department holds estimates of the number of women who have procured clandestine abortions since the establishment of a legal framework for abortion in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

It is vitally important that the Department of Health commission safe, local and accessible abortion services in Northern Ireland as soon as possible, otherwise there is a risk that women and girls turn to unofficial and often illegal healthcare options, without getting the appropriate advice or support.

I am not able to provide an estimate of the numbers of young women affected, but there are too many harrowing examples of people who have not been able to get access to healthcare in the right way. We need to ensure that women and girls in Northern Ireland, like those in the rest of the United Kingdom, have access to good quality advice and healthcare that takes into account their own individual needs. Crucial to this is the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland.

The current situation, where services have not been formally commissioned, is not acceptable. If there continues to be no progress, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will issue a direction using his powers under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, to ensure that services are commissioned and delivered according to the 2018 Report of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Social Distancing

Daisy Cooper:

[\[12307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to ensure social distancing in airports is adhered to.

Robert Courts:

The government has issued clear guidance for both passengers and operators, with airports encouraged to introduce clear signage and one-way passenger flows where appropriate. Arrangements may vary depending on the airport and guidance is available to support operators to manage flows in a COVID-secure way.

We continue to improve processes which maintain the checks we need to carry out to keep the public safe, while minimising disruption, and passengers can support this process by ensuring they have completed the necessary requirements to enter the UK. The government continues to engage with the aviation sector to ensure they are supported in implementing best practices.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[11499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of commercial airlines on ensuring that customers receive refunds or credit vouchers in the event that those customers decide not to travel having purchased airline tickets as a result of being unable to self-isolate for 10 days on their return to the UK from an amber list country under covid-19 travel restrictions.

Robert Courts:

The Minister for Aviation and/or Department for Transport officials held discussions with representatives from the travel industry, including aviation, regarding passenger rights most recently on the 5, 13 and 20 May, seeking their input to the development of the Passenger COVID-19 Charter.

Not all consumers will have the right to a refund if the restrictions relating to their destination change. The Charter sets out the rights and responsibilities for consumers while travel is affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The industry have responded with increased flexibility offering alternative dates and/or destinations for bookings for affected customers.

■ Bicycles: Parking

Mark Pritchard:

[\[10282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Royal National Institute of Blind People and The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association on ensuring that bikes are parked in docking stations to prevent them being parked at random on pavements and in pedestrian areas.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has regular discussions with its statutory advisors, the Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), on the transport needs of disabled people. I last met with the organisations mentioned in the question on 18th March 2021.

The Department has previously discussed this matter with stakeholders including local authorities and representatives from groups representing visually impaired people. Local authorities already have powers to deal with hire bicycles if they are causing an obstruction or nuisance.

■ Blue Badge Scheme

Darren Henry:

[\[11682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps she is taking to ensure that the process of applying for a Blue Badge for people in receipt of Attendance Allowance is as easy as the process for applying for working age benefits, such as Personal Independence Payments and Disability Living Allowance.

Rachel Maclean:

The Blue Badge scheme is primarily about helping those with severe mobility issues. In order to qualify for a Blue Badge, a person needs to meet one of the eligibility criteria set out in the regulations that govern the scheme.

There are several automatic qualifying criteria, such as receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance or an award of Personal Independence Payment under specific mobility criteria. There is no mobility component in Attendance Allowance, difficulty in walking must therefore be established through further assessment.

■ British Transport Police

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many British Transport Police officers there are; and how many he estimates there will be in (a) 2022, (b) 2023, (c) 2024, (d) 2025 and (e) 2026.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

At the end of May 2021, the British Transport Police (BTP) had 3,105 officers. It is not possible to confidently estimate future numbers.

■ British Transport Police: Finance**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[11635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, what plans the his Department has for the funding for the how the British Transport Police; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of changes to the funding model for the railway on the British Transport Police.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is setting up a Rail Transformation Programme within the Department for Transport and working with the rail sector to ensure a common understanding of the vision, establish the phases of delivery, and work collectively with the sector to design and implement this major project.

Following the publications of the White Paper, we are commencing detailed engagement and consultation across the industry, including with organisations such as British Transport Police.

■ Cycling and Walking: Sefton**Damien Moore:** [\[12292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of (a) the potential merits of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's proposed Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme, and (b) the impact on that area of the council's decision not to fund a constituency-wide consultation for all residents affected.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has made no such assessment. Local authorities are responsible for developing and implementing schemes such as Liveable Neighbourhoods.

The Department has consistently made clear in its guidance to local authorities that effective engagement with communities is key to delivering schemes that work for everyone. It is for local authorities to determine what consultation and engagement is appropriate.

■ Department for Transport: Railways**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[11630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many times he or officials in his Department have met with (a) First group, (b) Go Ahead, (c) Arriva, (d) Trenitalia, (e) Serco, (f) Keolis, (g) Abellio, (h) MTR and (i) Mitsui railway holding groups in the last 18 months; and on what dated those meetings were held.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Officials and Ministers have regular meetings with all owning groups as part of our duties to ensure effective management of the contracts held.

■ Department for Transport: Staff

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether officials in his Department in the last five years have received payment from rail or bus companies for consultancy services and advice during that time.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department's officials are required to declare any conflicts of interest. We do not have any records of actual or potential conflicts of interest relating to provision of services between officials and rail and bus companies over the last five years.

■ Driving Licences

Justin Madders:

[\[10457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average processing time is for the renewal of driving licences where there is a medical consideration.

Rachel Maclean:

As of 7 June 2021, the average number of working days taken to make a decision on whether to issue a driving licence where there is a medical consideration is shown below.

LICENCE TYPE	NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS
Group 1 (cars/motorcycles)	78
Group 2 (lorries/buses)	63

The time taken to issue a licence to drivers with a medical condition will vary where the DVLA is often reliant on receiving information from medical professionals to ensure drivers can meet the required medical standards.

■ Driving Tests

Alyn Smith:

[\[10650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog of driving theory tests.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is aware that demand for theory tests in Scotland is currently high and it is doing all it can to offer more tests at centres by increasing opening hours and running tests on extra days where possible. The provision of additional testing is dependent upon the availability of venues and agreements with landlords. The DVSA is working with its theory test provider, Pearson VUE, to explore further ways in which it can further increase theory test capacity.

The DVSA is continuing to work with the Scottish Government but as a result of the 2 metre physical distancing restrictions in Scotland, as required by the Scottish Government, it is unable to increase the number of desks used to take tests. This has reduced capacity at most theory test sites by 50%.

The DVSA and its theory test contract provider, Pearson VUE, have explored the possibility of delivering the theory tests outside of existing sites, but this was found to be not suitable as it is dependent upon a physical infrastructure within the Pearson VUE network.

■ Driving Tests: Large Goods Vehicles

John Redwood:

[\[12055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the rate of HGV driving tests undertaken.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has put in place a number of measures to increase driving tests. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). The DVSA has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners. The aim is to increase testing capacity and reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

■ DVLA: Recruitment

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[13069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase workforce capacity at the DVLA to reduce the time taken in licence application and renewal processes.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services have been available and unaffected throughout the pandemic and are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence.

However, many people still choose or have to apply for their driving licence using a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. The DVLA has had a reduced number of operational staff on site to allow for social distancing, in line with Welsh Government requirements.

However, the DVLA has leased an additional building to accommodate more operational staff and has extended the opening hours of its contact centre.

The DVLA is currently processing paper driving licence applications within around six weeks of receipt. However, drivers with a medical condition may experience further

delays because the DVLA is often reliant on receiving information or test results from medical professionals before a licence can be issued, to ensure drivers can meet the required medical standards.

■ Electric Scooters: Pedestrian Areas

Mark Pritchard:

[\[10284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to protect (a) pedestrians and (b) disabled people from (i) micro scooters and (ii) other types of electric vehicles used on pedestrian walkways.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[10285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the increased use of micro-mobility vehicles and e-scooters, if he will include a new category in the STATS19 data system to record personal injuries and accidents caused by electric scooters and other micro-mobility vehicles on public highways and pedestrian areas.

Rachel Maclean:

Since July 2020 I have held four e-scooter roundtable meetings with groups representing the interests of disabled people, including those with sight loss. The most recent roundtable was held on 7 June 2021. Local areas involved in the trials gave presentations on what they are doing to address the concerns of disabled people in trial areas.

We have instructed all local authorities participating in trials to engage throughout the trial period with these groups in their local areas to ensure their concerns are being heard and, where possible, mitigated.

E-scooters are treated like any other motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act. As such it is illegal to use an e-scooter in spaces which are set aside for use by pedestrians, cyclists, and horse-riders. This includes on the pavement and in cycle lanes. The law is very clear and there are existing penalties for improper use. Enforcement of offences relating to unlawful use of e-scooters is an operational matter for the police.

The STATS19 data collection system has recently been reviewed. As part of this review, it is proposed that a new category of 'powered personal transporter device' – including, but not exclusive to, e-scooters – is added to the list of available vehicle types in STATS19. Stakeholder feedback on the review recommendations is currently being analysed and is scheduled for publication alongside the next road casualty statistics later this year.

■ Electric Scooters: Visual Impairment

Janet Daby:

[\[11723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of e-scooters on the safety of visually impaired people.

Rachel Maclean:

Since July 2020 I have held four e-scooter roundtable meetings with groups representing the interests of disabled people, including those with sight loss. The most recent roundtable was held on 7 June 2021. Local areas involved in the trials gave presentations on what they are doing to address the concerns of disabled people in trial areas.

We have instructed all local authorities participating in trials to engage throughout the trial period with these groups in their local areas to ensure their concerns are being heard and, where possible, mitigated. Following our consultation last year, and feedback from subsequent stakeholder activities, we have required all e-scooters used in trials to have a horn or bell so that users can make others aware of their presence. The Department's guidance for trial areas is also clear that there needs to be sufficient parking provision in trial areas; where a dockless operating model is being used, local authorities should ensure that e-scooters do not become obstructive to other road users and pedestrians, particularly those with disabilities.

The Department has in place a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme and we have also made additional commitments such as allowing vulnerable road user groups to take part in the evaluation process.

■ Government Departments: Staff**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[11628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what potential conflicts of interest Departmental officials have declared in each of the last five years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Department of Transport employees are instructed that 'if they should come into official contact with matters concerning a business organisation (including any professional practice) in which they knowingly have an interest then they must disclose the fact to their line manager, and follow any Departmental instructions regarding the management of such interest'.

During 2021 there have been no conflicts of interest declared for Senior Civil Servant Department officials.

■ Great British Railways**Jim McMahon:**[\[13162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the proposed level of (a) Departmental and (b) parliamentary oversight will be of the Great British Railways body.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State for Transport will be accountable to Parliament for how the railways deliver for passengers, communities, the economy, the environment and taxpayers. Ministers will hold Great British Railways to account through a structured framework underpinned by legislation.

Ministers will take key funding decisions and have strong levers to set direction and pursue government policy. Ministers will also have statutory powers to set long-term strategy and have powers to issue guidance and mandatory directions to Great British Railways on any matter at any time.

These statutory and administrative controls will be vital to ensuring that Great British Railways will be focussed on delivering value for taxpayers, passengers and freight customers. Parliament, including through Select Committees, will continue to hold Ministers to account for these key strategic functions. Parliament will also be able to hold Great British Railways leadership team to account for rail planning and operations.

Jim McMahon:

[13163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) performance measures and (b) regulatory framework the Great British Railways body will operate within covering (i) infrastructure, (ii) operations and (iii) track access arrangements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Strong measures and structures will be put in place to ensure Great British Railways is accountable, transparent and reflective of its need to serve passengers, freight customers and taxpayers.

Funding streams will be conditional on meeting Great British Railways' mandate for delivering customer needs and making efficiency improvements.

Great British Railways will be subject to a series of mandates, including to operate in the interests of passengers, freight customers and local communities.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) will scrutinise Great British Railways' delivery of its objectives across the business, and will provide expert advice to the Secretary of State and devolved administrations. ORR will have powers to require improvement plans, encourage best practice and support problem solving across the sector. They will also act as an appeals body for operators, able to direct Great British Rail to change its decision where it has not applied its track access and charging policies fairly.

The government will consult with partners across the rail industry on the development and implementation of the new rules-based track access system. We will make an announcement on next steps in due course.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[13185]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether under the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail Great British Railways will have the ability to run services directly in the public sector.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We want to ensure that Passenger Service Contracts will attract the widest range of new and innovative bidders and can support a competitive market that delivers benefits for users and taxpayers.

Public sector operators are currently prohibited from operating franchised contracts in England & Wales except as an operator of last resort. The government is committed to maintaining and expanding opportunities for private business in supporting Britain's railways in the future.

As we move to implementing the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail we will take the opportunity to review existing legislation to ensure it is still up to date and appropriate. However, we expect the current provisions to continue.

■ **Great British Railways: South East**

Sir David Evennett:

[12960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the creation of Great British Railways on rail services in south east London.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Rail services in south east London will benefit from the creation of Great British Railways. Great British Railways, will provide strong unified leadership across the rail network, bringing ownership of the infrastructure, fares, timetables and planning the network under one roof.

Passenger-focused reforms will bring in improved services, with new Passenger Service Contracts focused on getting the trains running punctually and reliably.

In London and the South East, a new strategic partnership will be established to support housing, economic growth and the environment across the highly interconnected transport network in that part of the country. This will bring together Great British Railways, TfL and local authorities and businesses to coordinate timetabling and investments and to provide a consistent passenger experience in areas such as accessibility, ticketing and communications.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training**

Charlotte Nichols:

[10687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to provide grants to haulage businesses to pay for their drivers to train for Category C licences instead of introducing apprenticeships in the sector.

Rachel Maclean:

In 2016 the road haulage industry developed a Large Goods Vehicle Driver apprenticeship standard that includes the acquisition of a Category C licence and attracted £5,000 in apprenticeship levy funding.

This will be replaced in August with an apprenticeship for a Category C+E licence (for which the Category C licence is a pre-requisite) which will attract £7,000 in funding.

This decision to change to a Category C+E apprenticeship was made in collaboration with industry, based on the greater need for articulated lorry drivers.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Safety

Robert Halfon:

[\[10332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency enforces effectively the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulation 1986.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) does not have any statutory powers to enforce adherence to these regulations. The police can take action if a vehicle being used on the road is found to be in breach of the regulations. Construction and use requirements are also enforced through the annual MoT test that applies to most vehicle types and checked at the roadside and during other enforcement checks by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

All vehicles used on the public roads in the UK must have the relevant type approval (unless an exemption applies to the vehicle type) and comply with the technical and general use requirements of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. Type approval details are recorded on the DVLA's records when the vehicle is first registered. The registered keeper of the vehicle is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

■ Leamside Railway Line

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[12112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of opening a proposed Leamside South line on congestion on the East Coast Mainline.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department received a bid for funding to develop proposals to reinstate the Leamside Line (South of Tyne and Wearside) in the first round of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund. The bid was not successful at that stage and feedback was provided on how it could be improved.

The third round of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund closed on 5 March and a revised bid was received, which is currently undergoing assessment. We expect to announce outcomes in the Summer.

At this stage it is solely for the promoters of any bid to determine the scope of the assessments that would be carried out should they be successful. The proposal to reinstate the Leamside Line is also being examined by Transport for the North to inform the design of Northern Powerhouse Rail, and, as such, is being considered as part of the IRP. Its forthcoming publication will therefore inform the Department's planning for the long-term future of both the East Coast Main Line and additional rail routes throughout the North East.

■ London North Eastern Railway: DFT OLR Holdings**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[11625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the £40 million dividend paid by LNER to his Department's OLR Holdings Limited in 2019-20 for financial year 2018-19 (a) has been reinvested into the railways, (b) accrued to his Department and (c) accrued to the Exchequer.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The £40m dividend paid by LNER to DfT OLR Holdings Limited was recognised in the Departments Accounts and Estimates in the 2019/20 year.

■ M1: South Yorkshire**Sarah Champion:** [\[13081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide a list of incidents in which gantry notification systems were out of operation on the M1 between junctions 32 and 35a in the last three months.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England currently holds data to reflect the percentage of time that roadside technology is operable rather than the number of occasions that a device is offline.

Highways England assesses that, using the time period of January 1st, 2021 through to March 31st 2021, the latest period for which data is available, that all of the technology within the M1 Junctions 28 to 35a scheme boundary was operable for 97.11% of the time.

The boundaries of M1 Junctions 28 to 35a scheme are as stated within Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 1701.

There are maintenance standards associated with the service restoration time for the various devices associated with roadside technology (including those associated with smart motorways) that work to ensure the operability is maintained. There are factors such as accessing the roadside in a safe manner that could affect restoration times.

■ Members: Correspondence**John Penrose:** [\[11523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 21 January and 6 May 2021 on behalf of constituent, Paul Walton, on the impact of the pandemic on the aviation industry.

Robert Courts:

A response to these letters was sent on 7 June.

■ Pakistan: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[12098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he next plans to review Pakistan's status on the travel red list.

Robert Courts:

The allocation of countries to the traffic light system will be reviewed every three weeks, unless concerning evidence means we need to act faster to protect public health.

The next review will take place in the week commencing 21st June 2021.

■ Railway Stations: Tickets

Damien Moore:

[\[10619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure all railway stations have a self-service ticket machine.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department wants to see a high quality rail retailing service which allows passengers to buy their tickets quickly and conveniently. Ticket Vending Machines are one part of the overall retail service, alongside other ways to buy tickets including online purchase and pay-as-you-go. As ticket buying is modernised we will look to the rail industry, including in future Great British Railways, to ensure that the overall retail offer is appropriate to the needs of passengers, including those without access to the internet.

The Department has worked with the rail industry to enhance ticket buying facilities, including ensuring that smart tickets are accepted at stations across almost all of the network. Passengers have the choice of travelling without a paper ticket, such as by receiving barcode tickets straight to their phones. The Williams Shapps Plan for Rail also commits the Government to introducing far more convenient ways to pay using a contactless bank card, mobile or online.

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment

Esther McVey:

[\[10369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to support National Rail to complete improvements to station platforms in Tatton constituency that are hazardous to passengers with impaired vision.

Esther McVey:

[\[10370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the suitability of station platforms in (a) Tatton constituency and (b) England for passengers with impaired vision.

Esther McVey: [\[10371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of Network Rail on work to improve station platforms for passengers with impaired vision.

Esther McVey: [\[10372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the need to bring forward the 2029 deadline for Network Rail to install tactile indicators across operational platforms.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We have continued to support the Access for All programme that upgrades railway stations, including Handforth station, for disabled passengers, and also for those with visual impairments.

I have asked Network Rail to develop a programme to aim to install platform edge tactile strips on every platform in Great Britain.

I will make a further announcement in due course.

■ Railways: Conditions of Employment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[10587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether proposals to create an integrated workforce strategy will include providing for rail workers to be promoted or transferred between different railway companies.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[10588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, what plans he has to hold discussions with trade unions on creating an integrated workforce strategy.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

An integrated workforce strategy will benefit both the industry and passengers and will be led by Great British Railways. The Rail Transformation Programme will undertake further work to establish the scope of the strategy. Trade Unions, who met with Keith Williams multiple times during the review period, will continue to be consulted.

■ Railways: Contracts

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a tendering process will be undertaken by Great British Railways for the new Passenger Service Contracts.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Great British Railways will aim to compete all contracts. The new Passenger Service contracts will reduce barriers to entry for bidders and reinvigorate the competitive market for rail.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[12268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will set out a timetable for agreeing the new (a) National Rail Contracts and (b) Passenger Service Contracts.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The first NRCs were awarded at the end of May 2021 for Trans Pennine Express and South West Rail, with a rolling programme of awards to March 2022. PSCs will gradually replace NRCs. The Government will work with potential commercial partners and investors to design Passenger Service Contracts in a way that will create a healthy, sustainable commercial market, and will launch initial competitions by the time the emergency recovery agreements end in 2022.

■ Railways: Franchises**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[10592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether the operator of last resort functions currently performed by his Department will subsumed by Great British Railways.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[10594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether (a) Northern and (b) LNER services currently being run in the public sector will be transferred to Great British Railways to be run in the public sector.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The government is committed to maintaining and expanding opportunities for the private sector in supporting Britain's railways in the future.

The new Passenger Service Contracts will be competed and should increase innovation and competition.

As set out the in the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail operators will be held accountable and risk termination of their contracts if they are not delivering punctual, efficient and high-quality services. The government will retain its operator of last resort function to enable services to continue seamlessly for passengers in such cases.

■ Railways: Freight**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[12266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, (a) when he plans to set a growth target for rail freight; (b) how that target will be determined; and (c) whether he plans to consult ahead of developing that target.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is setting up a Rail Transformation Programme within the Department for Transport and working with the rail sector to ensure a common understanding of the vision, establish the phases of delivery, and work collectively with the sector to design and implement this major project.

Following the publication of the White Paper, we are commencing detailed engagement and consultation across the industry, including the freight sector so we can deliver the Government's commitment to the rail freight industry and maximise the environmental and economic benefits that rail freight delivers.

■ Railways: Hydrogen**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[12962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by the Railway Industry Association entitled Why rail electrification?, published on 22 April 2021; whether he has plans to utilise hydrogen powered trains in addition to electric traction in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I welcome this report and agree that further electrification will be required to decarbonise the railway to support our target of reaching Net Zero emissions across the entire UK economy by 2050. As part of the decarbonisation process, the government also supports the deployment of hydrogen and battery trains on some lines where they make operational and economic sense. The department's forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set out the government's ambition for the scale and pace for rail decarbonisation between now and 2050.

■ Railways: North of England**Jim McMahon:**[\[13161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the total cost to the public purse of the Transpennine Route Upgrade programme.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Transpennine Route Upgrade is a multi-billion pound programme, expected to be the largest investment in the existing rail network over the next 5 years. At this stage it is not possible to be specific about the total cost as we continue to work through design and development phases for the project. Funding of £589m was announced in July 2020, and an extra £317m in May 2021 to improve connectivity between Leeds, Manchester and York and commence early works, including electrification between

York and Church Fenton. An update to the Business Case will be presented this Summer.

■ **Railways: Pay**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether the proposal that the Office for Road and Rail will publish data on rail workers salaries will include the mandatory publication of (a) directors pay and (b) rail company profits.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

This information is already in the public domain due to Train Operating Companies' legal obligations as private limited companies.

■ **Railways: Public Sector**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the public sector is prohibited from operating rail passenger services except as an operator of last resort; and whether the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail will propose bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the Railways Act 1993.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As we move to implementing the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail we will take the opportunity to review existing legislation, including the rules on who is able to provide passenger services to ensure it is still up to date and appropriate.

■ **Railways: Scotland and Wales**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether the (a) Scottish (b) and Welsh Governments will be able to opt to run their rail passenger services in the public sector, without the need for a tendering process.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[10591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to policy paper entitled Great British Railways: Williams-Shapps plan for rail, published by his Department on 20 May 2021, whether the (a) Scottish and (b) Welsh Governments will be able to opt to run their rail passenger services in the public sector without the need to appoint an operator of last resort.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As set out in The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, devolved authorities in Scotland and Wales will continue to exercise their current powers and to be democratically

accountable for them. This includes the ability for both governments to use their operator of last resort when appropriate.

The Scottish Government currently has the ability to contract services to a public sector bidder. The Department will work with Transport Scotland to enable Scotland to benefit from reforms on the wider network of Great Britain.

Public sector operators are currently prohibited from bidding for rail services in England & Wales. The government is committed to maintaining a major role for private business in supporting Britain's railways.

As we move to implementing The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail we will take the opportunity to review existing legislation, including the rules on who is able to bid to provide passenger services in England and Wales to ensure it is still up to date and appropriate.

■ Railways: Social Distancing

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[12226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prevent overbooking and (b) ensure safe social distancing on national rail services following the easing of covid-19 restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government has published safer transport guidance for operators which sets out measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus for passengers and staff. In line with this, all train operators are expected to carry out their own risk assessments on the most appropriate action to take.

Risk assessments are expected, where possible, to enable social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations, taking account of factors such as the design of different types of rolling stock. Some operators of long-distance services have limited ridership by selling only a set number of seats and requiring reservations. In addition, train operators have increased services levels as we move through the roadmap to provide additional capacity as demand increases. Operators are also providing information on how busy services are likely to be so that passengers can plan ahead and use quieter services where possible.

■ Roads: Accidents

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[11508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on its trial on the use of red flashing lights by recovery operators; what date the outcome of that trial will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has finalised its work specification for the trials programme and will shortly seek tenders for the research on a competitive basis. It is anticipated the programme will include three elements: real-world scenario testing in a safe off-road

environment; assessments of the effects of a proliferation of warning lamps on road user reactions and safety, and to develop guidance for road recovery operators on the use of lighting functions currently permitted by regulation.

The department anticipates the research to be 6-9 months in duration once contracted. A report of the trials and final guidance document will be published upon completion.

■ Rolling Stock

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[12271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the health of the rolling stock market following the ORR's determination in April 2020 that the original competition concerns identified by the Competition Commission in 2009 have not been alleviated.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In April 2020, the ORR determined that rolling stock owners continued to comply with a Transparency Order imposed by the Competition Commission in 2009. The rolling stock market remains buoyant with the private sector continuing to offer rolling stock to train operators in a competitive and transparent manner.

■ Rolling Stock: Leasing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost has been to the public purse of payments made to rolling stock leasing companies since March 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under the Emergency Agreements that were introduced early in the Covid-19 pandemic, train operators have been reclassified from the private to the public sector for statistical purposes from April 2020. As such, all rolling stock costs incurred by operators now represent spending by the public sector.

During the 2020/21 financial year, total rolling stock costs for train operators working under contracts with the Department for Transport were approximately £2.1bn. This remains a provisional figure as full audited accounts for the year are not yet available.

Most rolling stock on the network was financed and procured by the private sector rolling stock companies to meet the needs of train operators as part of their bids in respect of the former franchise process. Rolling stock was then leased to private sector train operators, although a wide range of lease terms are in use and contracts can often cover services such as train maintenance and stabling, as well as train rentals.

■ Rolling Stock: Procurement

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Great British Railways is planned to be responsible for (a) a long-term rolling stock strategy and (b) the efficient use of public funds in the procurement of rolling stock; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Private sector investment in rolling stock will continue.

Great British Railways will be able to take a strategic overview while private sector Train Operating Companies will retain responsibility for procuring value from the market to meet service requirements and improve the passenger experience in reliability accessibility and comfort.

The government will take forward work to assess options to ensure reliable delivery and value for money for the taxpayer and users. This work will also consider supply chain sustainability and how to sustain and generate high-value jobs and economic activity.

■ South Western Rail Franchise and Transpennine Express: Contracts

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what performance indicators and other criteria will trigger a bonus payment under the terms of new National Rail Contracts his Department has signed for the (a) TransPennine Express and (b) and South Western Rail franchise.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under the National Rail Contracts, performance of an operator is measured against four criteria – Operational Performance; Customer Experience; Financial Performance; and Business Management. The assessment is as objective as possible, using a mix of criteria-based, qualitative scorecard assessments and quantified target measures, where practical. Performance payments are achieved solely on meeting outcomes defined within the contract – for example delivering a punctual service.

■ Speed Limits

Rachael Maskell: [\[14011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the 2020 Stockholm Declaration, what steps his Department has taken to introduce a maximum road travel speed of 20mph where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government takes road safety very seriously and continues to support activities that promote road safety domestically and internationally, as well as supporting the aims of both the UN and Stockholm Declarations.

Local authorities already have the power to set 20mph speed limits where people and traffic mix. The Department's guidance, designed to make sure that speed limits are appropriately and consistently set while allowing for flexibility to deal with local circumstances, makes clear that 20mph can be introduced both on streets that are primarily residential and on other town and city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high. This outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic.

■ Speed Limits: Schools

Rachael Maskell:

[\[13142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring that all roads around schools have a maximum speed limit of 20 mph.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits on 22 November 2018.

The research substantially strengthens the evidence base on perceptions, speeds and early outcomes associated with 20mph speed limits, and is the only major UK study to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.

The overall approach was based on evidence from twelve case study schemes, comprising a variety of area types, road types and scale. Ten of the twelve schemes studied were predominantly residential with schools (the other two being city centres).

The headline findings were:

- 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers
- There has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph).
- Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds.
- There is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.
- In one city centre case study there has been a significant reduction in collisions and casualties.

Work by AECOM for the Department for Transport in 2009 found that the presence of schools was by far the strongest driver in the decision to implement 20mph zones (with traffic calming) and 20mph signed-only limits.

■ Speed Limits: Urban Areas**Rachael Maskell:** [\[14010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing the UN Streets for Life campaigns' recommendation of introducing a 20mph vehicle speed limit in areas where people walk, live and play.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave to the Honourable Member for Coventry South on 17th May [881]

■ Trains: Antisocial Behaviour and Crimes of Violence**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce antisocial behaviour and assaults on trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to reducing crime, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the fear of crime wherever it occurs in the transport system. We want to see more and more people using public transport - one of the key ways of encouraging this is to make sure it is a safe option.

The Department works with the British Transport Police (BTP) to tackle crime and ASB on the railways in Great Britain. Train Operating Companies are required to work with BTP to manage and reduce railway crime.

BTP has dedicated public order and violent crime officers who are deployed to some of the more challenging locations on the rail network.

BTP has run a number of successful initiatives in recent years to encourage more reporting of crimes, which is also likely to be a factor in the increase in numbers of crimes reported. BTP has a popular dedicated crime reporting text service - '61016' – which allows people to report offences to the police easily and discreetly.

During the pandemic the British Transport Police have worked closely with rail industry colleagues to ensure that ASB, assaults and staff aggression have been kept to a minimum whilst restrictions have been in place. The rail industry has been encouraged to promote Body Worn Video as a safety feature, as there is evidence that it deters aggressive behaviour to the wearer and supports the evidential chain in the event of an assault or aggression.

■ Trains: Coronavirus**Damien Moore:** [\[12289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) social distancing and (b) other covid-19 measures are enforced on trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government has published safer transport guidance for operators which sets out measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus for passengers and staff. In line with this, all train operators are expected to carry out their own risk assessments on the most appropriate action to take.

Risk assessments are expected, where possible, to enable social distancing of 2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigations, taking account of factors such as the design of different types of rolling stock. Some operators of long-distance services have limited ridership by selling only a set number of seats and requiring reservations. In addition, train operators have increased services levels as we move through the roadmap to provide additional capacity as demand increases. Operators are also providing information on how busy services are likely to be so that passengers can plan ahead and use quieter services where possible.

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:**[\[11538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long the red, amber and green traffic light travel lists will be in place.

Robert Courts:

The International Travel and Operator Liability Regulations, which give legal effect to the traffic light country system, will expire at the end of 16 May 2022, unless revoked earlier.

A statutory review clause is included in the Regulations. The Secretary of State must review whether the Regulations remain effective, necessary and proportionate on public health grounds at least every 28 days.

Julian Sturdy:[\[11539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish the dates when travel lists will be reviewed and updates announced.

Robert Courts:

The allocation of countries to the traffic light system will be reviewed every three weeks, unless concerning evidence means we need to act faster to protect public health.

The next review will take place in the week commencing 21st June 2021.

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[11606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's traffic light system for international travel, what the scientific criteria is for determining whether a country is rated green, amber or red.

Robert Courts:

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of countries and territories. Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border

measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account the JBC risk assessments, alongside wider public health factors. Key factors in the JBC risk assessment of each country include genomic surveillance capability, COVID-19 transmission risk and Variant of Concern transmission risk. A summary of the JBC methodology has been published on GOV.UK, alongside key data that supports ministers' decisions.

Sam Tarry: [\[11699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to regularly review those countries on the covid-19 travel red list.

Robert Courts:

The allocation of countries to the traffic light system, including those on the red list, will be reviewed every three weeks, unless concerning evidence means we need to act faster to protect public health.

The next review will take place in the week commencing 21st June 2021.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[11732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of decreasing the time between the (a) announcement of countries being removed from the covid-19 green list for travel purposes and (b) enforcement of that rule.

Robert Courts:

The allocation of countries to the traffic light system will be reviewed every three weeks, unless there is a sudden change in the data and risk to a country that needs to be acted upon quickly. The next review will take place in the week commencing 21 June.

The timing between announcement and implementation of changes to country allocations under the traffic light system has been assessed to be appropriate in order to give travellers as much notice as possible whilst balancing the public health risk.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the cost of a covid-19 PCR test when travelling abroad has been formulated; and if he will reduce the cost of that test.

Robert Courts:

The cost of tests is set by the companies operating in the private testing market. The government is working with the travel industry and private testing providers to see how we can further reduce costs for the British public while ensuring travel is as safe as possible.

We are considering a range of options including cheaper tests being used when passengers return home. The price of tests has reduced significantly in recent weeks, with some providers offering testing packages for green arrivals starting at £43.

TREASURY**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties**

Jessica Morden: [\[10246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a differential duty rate on administration costs for beer (a) producers and (b) retailers.

Jessica Morden: [\[10247\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the cost of implementing a differential alcohol duty rate for the off-trade sector.

Jessica Morden: [\[10248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the economic impact of the proposal set out in his Department's Alcohol duty review to differentiate based on place of retail.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is considering the merits of differentiating products based on the place of retail as part of its alcohol duty review and has consulted industry and stakeholders for their views. Officials are working closely with HMRC to assess the practical implications of potential options, such as administration costs. The Treasury will provide further updates about the review in due course.

■ Business: Taxation

Bridget Phillipson: [\[10353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide information on the (a) mean and (b) median duration of all enquiries concluded that year by HMRC's Large Business Directorate in each financial year between 2014-15 and 2019-20; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The mean and median duration in months for all enquiries concluded by HMRC's Large Business Directorate was as follows:

YEAR	MEAN	MEDIAN
2014-15	11.2	4
2015-16	11.2	4
2016-17	14.3	5
2017-18	12.9	6

YEAR	MEAN	MEDIAN
2018-19	14.8	8
2019-20	17.2	7

■ Children: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[11663\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on funding specific covid-19 recovery policies for disabled children and young people.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury Ministers regularly meet with other government departments and a range of stakeholders, which includes discussions around disabled children and young people, and COVID-19 recovery.

As part of plans to boost education recovery, the government is investing £1.7 billion in academic years 20-21 and 21-22. This includes a £650 million catch up premium in 20-21, and £302 million one-off recovery premium in 21-22. Schools can prioritise this funding to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) where appropriate.

The government is providing a further £1.4 billion over the next three academic years for education recovery, including £1 billion to support up to six million, 15-hour tutoring courses for disadvantaged school children.

■ Duty Free Allowances: Shops

David Linden:

[\[13204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment HMRC has made of the potential merits of introducing arrivals duty free shops in airports, international rail and ferry terminals in Great Britain.

Kemi Badenoch:

Following a consultation, the Government announced on 11 September 2020 that duty-free sales would be extended to EU-bound passengers for the first time in over 20 years from 1 January 2021.

This is a significant boost to all airports and international rail terminals in England, Scotland and Wales, including Manchester, and smaller regional airports and rail hubs, which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

Duty-free on arrival did not form part of the Government's consultation on the potential approach to duty- and tax-free goods arising from the UK's new relationship with the EU, which took place in the Spring of 2020. The Government nonetheless acknowledged in the summary of responses to the consultation that some

stakeholders had requested the introduction of duty-free on arrival. This also set out that duty-free on arrival was not a scheme that the Government previously offered and was therefore not considering implementing the scheme at that time.

Duty-free on arrival could undermine the UK high street and run counter to public health objectives. The Government would also need to consider the cost and any revenue and legal risks of introducing such a scheme. Any new tax relief will impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which excise duty makes a significant contribution. Duty on alcohol and tobacco raises over £22 billion and plays a key role in funding vital public services like the NHS and addressing harms caused by these products. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

■ Exports: Northern Ireland

Dave Doogan:

[13225]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assistance is available to exporters in the UK who are struggling to ship goods to individual customers in Northern Ireland due to (a) an increase in shipping costs, (b) customers not having an EORI number and (c) not being registered with the TSS.

Jesse Norman:

The Northern Ireland Protocol entails some new administrative processes for traders, notably new digital import declaration requirements and digital safety and security information for goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK. Processes are fully digital and eligible to be facilitated by the Trader Support Service (TSS). There are no export or exit declarations needed for goods leaving Great Britain for Northern Ireland.

The TSS is a free, optional service which supports all businesses affected by the Protocol. It can complete declarations on behalf of traders so that they do not need to engage directly with new digital customs systems or processes and in most cases traders will not need their own XI EORI number. Traders can register by going to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/trader-support-service>.

As well as the TSS, the Government has provided a range of support for traders affected by the Protocol, including:

- Publishing a suite of new guidance to support Great Britain and Northern Ireland businesses engaging in new processes under the Protocol.
- Creating the Movement Assistance Scheme, which provides support to traders moving agri-food commodities and equines from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.
- Creating a £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund to support small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) adjust to new customs, rules of origin, and VAT rules.
- Implementing a range of other support schemes, including the General Export Facility guarantee scheme aimed at SMEs, which means the Government can

provide an 80% guarantee on financial support from lenders to help with general exporting costs, up to the value of £25 million.

- Implementing the UK Trader Scheme, which ensures that authorised traders do not pay tariffs on the movement of goods into Northern Ireland from Great Britain, where those goods can be shown to remain in the UK customs territory.
- Permitting waivers for duty on goods that traders bring into Northern Ireland from Great Britain that would normally be charged 'at risk' tariffs, up to a maximum allowance of €200,000 over three tax years.
- A temporary extension of the period in which traders who do not have a fixed place of business in Northern Ireland can be authorised to declare their goods "not at risk" until 1 November 2021, providing they meet all other UK Trader Scheme eligibility requirements.
- Establishing a specific taskforce working with businesses across Northern Ireland and Great Britain on issues related to the Protocol.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12208\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide further support to sectors that recover slowly from the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the pandemic, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. To do this, the government has put in place an economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change. The cumulative cost to the Government of this support since the start of the pandemic £352 billion.

Schemes such as the CJRS and SEISS, support for businesses through grants and loans, business rates and VAT relief are continuing beyond the end of the Roadmap. CJRS and SEISS have been extended until the end of September 2021, business rates and VAT relief to the end of the financial year, and Recovery Loans until the end of December 2021.

Thanks to the people's hard work and sacrifice, supported by the success of the initial stages of the vaccine rollout, there is now a path to reopening the economy. We will continue to take a flexible but cautious approach as we review restrictions, ensuring support reflects the easing of restrictions to enable the economy to bounce back as quickly as possible.

■ Health Services: Private Sector

Zarah Sultana:

[\[12316\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 182103 on Health Services: Private Sector, if he will publish the rationale for his

decision to make covid-19 financial support, such as business rates discounts and grants, available to betting shops but not some dental practices.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

The Government has targeted COVID-19 business grant schemes, including Restart Grants, at businesses that have been mandated to close, many of whom are facing high fixed property related costs. This was on the basis that these businesses are less likely to have sufficient cash reserves to meet their costs. These businesses have also continued to be hardest hit by social restrictions and social distancing over the last few months, and therefore have a reduced ability to generate revenue to cover their costs.

A range of further measures to support all businesses, including dental practices, have also been made available, such as the extension of the furlough scheme, Recovery Loan Schemes, and enhanced Time to Pay for Taxes.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[13000\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 16 April 2021 on NHS pay rise, reference ZA56278.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury responded to the Member on 4 May 2021. A further copy has been sent by email.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Testing**

Emma Hardy:

[\[10601\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to make specific financial support available to the motor trade industry to compensate loss of revenue as a result of the six month extension of MOTs following the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the importance of the UK motor industry and the severe impacts of Covid. The sector has benefited from unprecedented support for businesses and individuals over the past year. We continue to work with trade associations and companies to understand the sector's needs and what support measures companies plan to use as we continue to restart the economy.

The extension to MOT certificates was introduced last year in response to the emerging coronavirus pandemic. This was to ensure that motorists could continue to use their vehicles to travel to work where essential, or to shop for essential food and medicine. The Government did not mandate garage closures, and car servicing was not prohibited. This meant that, while MOT certificates had been extended, motorists

would still be able to keep their vehicles safe and roadworthy, including receiving any necessary repairs and maintenance.

■ **Plastics: Recycling**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[11479\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that, ahead of the introduction of a Plastics Tax in April 2022, consumers are actively engaged in the increased recycling of plastic packaging, allowing for business of all sizes to secure the necessary supplies to meet the 30 per cent post-consumer recycled content requirement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government expects Plastic Packaging Tax to create greater demand for recycled material and in turn stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste.

The supply of recycled material is also expected to increase in the future as a result of technical advancements, improvements to collection infrastructure through the Government's proposals for consistency in recycling, and the planned reforms to the Packaging Producer Responsibility system.

■ **Public Houses: Government Assistance**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[10613\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support the brewery and pub sector in its recovery from covid-19 lockdowns as part of his Department's review of alcohol duty; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

Pubs and breweries continue to benefit from a variety of support measures, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of September 2021; a new UK-wide recovery loan scheme to make available loans between £25,001 and £10 million; and the Additional Restrictions Grant, which provides an additional £425 million of discretionary funding to support local businesses.

Recognising the challenges faced by the beer and pub industry, the Government also decided to freeze alcohol duty at the 2021 Budget.

The alcohol duty review is considering long-term reforms, and further updates will be provided in due course. The Government continues to keep all taxes under review.

■ **Shipping: Assets**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[12182\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department have had with relevant stakeholders on HMRC's enforcement of classification of long-term and short-term assets for commercial maritime vessels.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[12183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of HMRC on the classification of long-term and short-term vessels under the capital allowance scheme for commercial maritime vessels.

Jesse Norman:

Treasury officials are in regular contact with HMRC colleagues. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

HMRC do not classify which assets should be written down at the main or special rate of writing down allowances. Instead, businesses should identify whether an asset they have acquired has a useful economic life (UEL) of more or less than 25 years when new. This UEL test for plant and machinery should be applied on the asset as a whole, rather than individual components; since for tax purposes the asset is depreciated as a single unit.

■ **SME Brexit Support Fund**

Bill Esterson:

[\[12115\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have received funding through the SME Brexit Support Fund.

Jesse Norman:

As of 7 June 2021, nearly 2,000 businesses have been offered grants amounting to £3.1m through the SME Brexit Support Fund.

■ **Treasury: Correspondence**

Damien Moore:

[\[10623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure correspondence sent to his Department is responded to within 20 working days.

Kemi Badenoch:

We recognise the great importance of the effective and timely handling of correspondence.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, HM Treasury has brought in additional staff to its central correspondence team and ensured its correspondence processes are as efficient as possible so Members receive timely, accurate and informative replies to their queries.

■ **UK Infrastructure Bank: Loan Guarantee Scheme**

Peter Dowd:

[\[10424\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the new UK Infrastructure Bank will have a mandate to offer loan guarantees for at-scale retrofit projects.

Kemi Badenoch:

As set out in the Budget, the UK Infrastructure Bank will have a broad mandate to offer support across different sectors. This includes being able to support retrofit projects that contribute to achieving net zero emissions, where the Bank's investment criteria are met.

The Government will provide further guidance on the investment parameters for the Bank in the Framework document to be published at launch.

The Bank will have a range of financing tools at its disposal including senior debt, equity, hybrid products and guarantees.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Civil Service: Equality**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10293\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme on (a) recruitment and retention of LGBT+ employees, (b) well-being and productivity of LGBT+ employees, (c) positive work environments and (d) adherence to equality law of Government departments that have participated in that programme.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10294\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential effect of withdrawing Government departments from the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme on the Government's (a) reputation as an institution that upholds equality and diversity for LGBT+ employees, (b) international reputation for LGBT+ equality, (c) work to promote LGBT+ equality internationally and (d) adherence to equality law.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10295\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what information her Department holds on employee satisfaction with the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme within Government departments that participate in that programme.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[10296\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what representations she has received from LGBT+ civil service employees on the effect of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme on their employment experience.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government supports inclusive workplaces and believes that all LGBT people should be able to be themselves at work, so that they can do their best and achieve their full potential.

It is fundamental that everyone is able to seize opportunities in the workplace without fear of discrimination or harassment.

Memberships of external schemes are kept under review, to ensure value for taxpayers' money.

■ **Gay Conversion Therapy**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[13172\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she has taken to ensure her Department's consultation on banning so-called conversion therapy prioritises the voices of survivors of that practice.

Kemi Badenoch:

Any ban we bring forward must work for those who need it most, especially victims and survivors. We have also already met with conversion therapy survivors, to hear about their experiences. We have committed to launching a consultation in September and this will be vital for ensuring the action we take is informed, effective and proportionate. I would encourage anyone who has been a victim of conversion therapy to respond to our consultation when it launches in September.

■ **LGBT People**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[13171\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the National LGBT Action Plan 2018, which of the recommendations she has instructed her Department to implement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The 2018 LGBT Action Plan was introduced by the previous administration. We have set out our plan for LGBT advancement for this Government and our priorities are banning Conversion Therapy and hosting the Global LGBT Conference. The objective was, and continues to be, to defend, extend and promote the rights and freedoms of LGBT people here and abroad.

We have achieved a great deal for LGBT people since 2018, including appointing the UK's first National LGBT Health Adviser, more than doubling the number of places available on the PrEP Impact Trial, running a world-leading anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying programme in schools and working with the Home Office to update the Hate Crime Action Plan.

■ **Local Government: Training**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[12079\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether her Department has made an assessment of the effect of participation in training sessions based on Critical Race Theory on local authority employees.

Kemi Badenoch:

In the Written Ministerial Statement of 15 December 2020, [HCWS652](#), the Government outlined how unconscious bias training fails to deliver value for

taxpayers' money and is ineffective. We indicated that it will be phased out in the Civil Service, and encourage the wider public sector to do the same.

Similar principles can be applied to "critical race theory" training, which is a controversial political ideology. Councils should be seeking to keep council tax down, and focus resources to supporting frontline services and covid recovery.

Moreover, the application of critical race theory to municipal public services threatens to undermine integration and community cohesion, by exaggerating differences within local communities; instead, councils should be seeking to build and strengthen a shared local and national identity across class, colour and creed.

■ Racial Discrimination: Technology

Chi Onwurah: [\[13053\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 3857 on Racial Discrimination: Technology, whether she has made a further assessment of the feasibility of defining fairness mathematically as referred to in the The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities published on 31 March 2021, other than in the research cited in footnotes 101-105 of that report.

Chi Onwurah: [\[13054\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 3857 on Racial Discrimination: Technology and with reference to the conclusions report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report, published on 31 March 2021, whether it is her policy (a) that before dismissing any system, it should be compared with the alternative, (b) that an automated system may be imperfect, but a human system may be worse, and (c) to make a comparative assessment of the potential merits of using (i) automated and (ii) human systems.

Chi Onwurah: [\[13055\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 3857 on Racial Discrimination: Technology, whether the research referred to in that Answer is limited to the research cited in footnotes 101-105 of The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' report dated 31 March 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities published its findings on 31 March 2021. The report took an evidence-led approach drawing on academic research, expert views and over 2,300 submissions to the call for evidence. The Employment and Enterprise chapter of the report summarises the Commission's research about Artificial Intelligence systems and bias in technology.

The Commission recommended that the government issue guidance that clarifies how to apply the Equality Act to algorithmic decision-making and require transparency for public sector bodies when this is applied to decisions concerning individuals. The government is still carefully considering the report's findings and recommendations and will respond in full this summer.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Public Expenditure

Philip Davies: [10269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what acceptable level of (a) fraud and (b) error her Department has set for its expenditure.

Philip Davies: [10270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to eliminate (a) fraud and (b) error from the spending in her Department.

Philip Davies: [10271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the proportion of her Department's spending that was (a) fraud and (b) error in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

DWP takes fraud and error very seriously. Estimates of fraud and error levels in the benefit system in Great Britain in the financial years from 2005/2006 to 2020/2021 are available in the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system-financial-year-2020-to-2021-estimates>

The Department for Work and Pensions is increasingly moving from detecting fraud and error to actively preventing it from happening and has optimised its digital capability and organisational design to enable this. The recent money secured via the Spring Budget will enable the Department to expand the Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service (IRIS), develop pre-payment 'risking' techniques (Transaction Risking) and maintain the new Enhanced Checking Service, who intervene on high risk claims before they get in to payment.

Where fraud does enter the benefit system, there are dedicated teams to investigate this. The Department is committed to the use of appropriate penalties and the recovery of monies from the perpetrators, where fraud is established. To support this work, DWP's Counter Fraud, Compliance and Debt team is undertaking an ambitious recruitment programme which will significantly further expand our counter-fraud capacity.

We will continue to work with other Government departments and law enforcement agencies nationally and across borders to ensure appropriate intelligence and resources are shared, enabling the totality of any criminality to be identified and investigated.

■ Employment: North West Durham**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[12331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) rate of (i) unemployment, (ii) employment, (iii) the economically active in North West Durham constituency in each year since May 1997.

Mims Davies:

The information requested for years from 2004 is published and available at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

Guidance for users can be found at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

Estimates of economic activity at the constituency level are produced from the Annual Population Survey (APS), due to its larger sample size than the Labour Force Survey. The APS is only available from 2004 onwards.

■ Employment: Poverty**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[12154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of in-work poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Will Quince:

The national and regional statistics on the number of people living in working households in low income as set out in the annual 'Households Below Average Income' publication are not available at constituency or city level as the sample size would not be sufficient to produce robust estimates.

Statistics showing the levels of in-work poverty in both the West Midlands and England can be found on stat-xplore. The latest figures are for 2019/20:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Food Poverty**Rachael Maskell:** [\[12210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the level of food poverty in (a) the UK, (b) Yorkshire and (c) York.

Will Quince:

National and regional statistics on the number of food insecure households are published annually in the "Family Resources Survey" publication.

Statistics on levels of food insecure households in the UK and Yorkshire and the Humber, covering 2019/20, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

Data for York is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

■ **Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing**

Chris Stephens:

[11591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households were subject to the under-occupancy penalty; what the total size was of the reduction in benefit payments resulting from the under-occupancy penalty; and what the average reduction per affected claimant was, by parliamentary constituency, in the most recent 12 month period for which data are available.

Will Quince:

The information requested is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> within the sections on "Housing Benefit" and "Households on Universal Credit".

For the total size of reduction in benefit payments average reduction per affected claimant "RSRS reduction" with "measures" will need to be used. Guidance for users is available at: <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Marion Fellows:

[12187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend the Kickstart employment scheme to include legacy benefit claimants.

Mims Davies:

There are presently no plans to expand the Kickstart Scheme outside of the current eligibility criteria.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[12153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effect of the Kickstart scheme on levels of youth unemployment in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout and after its implementation.

Delivering the Kickstart Scheme at pace has led to a limited data set which makes it harder to accurately present a snapshot of a smaller geographical area. We are continuing to develop our data, which may help in sharing constituency level information in due course.

However, as of the 3rd June 2021 we are able to provide that in the ONS defined region of the West Midlands (which includes the Coventry North East constituency and Coventry), around 12,840 Kickstart jobs had been made available for young people to apply for and around 2,800 jobs have been started by young people on the Kickstart Scheme.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[10434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for mandatory reconsideration of an application for a personal independence payment were lodged by people with epilepsy in each of the last three years; and how many of those mandatory reconsiderations resulted in (a) an award of benefit where this had previously been refused and (b) an increase in the level of benefit.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[10435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for personal independence payment lodged by people with epilepsy were referred to a tribunal in each of the last three years; and how many of those referrals resulted in (a) an award of benefit where this had previously been refused and (b) an increase in the level of benefit.

Justin Tomlinson:

The tables below provide information on initial decisions following a Personal Independence Payment assessment for claimants with a primary disabling condition of epilepsy:

FINANCIAL YEAR OF INITIAL DECISION	MRs REGISTERED	DISALLOWED AT INITIAL DECISION – AWARD CHANGED AT MR	AWARDED AT INITIAL DECISION AND AWARD CHANGED AT MR
2018-19	4,690	570	370
2019-20	3,870	490	670
2020-21 (to September)	1,110	180	210

FINANCIAL YEAR OF INITIAL DECISION	APPEALS LODGED	DISALLOWED AT INITIAL AND MR DECISIONS – AWARD CHANGED AT TRIBUNAL HEARING OR APPEAL LAPSED	AWARDED AT INITIAL OR MR DECISION – AWARD CHANGED AT TRIBUNAL HEARING OR APPEAL LAPSED
2018-19	2,160	980	760
2019-20	1,460	430	590
2020-21 (to September)	300	50	80

Notes:

- Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.
- The volumes of MRs and appeals for the more recent periods of initial decision could increase as claimants' progress to MR and appeal.
- Data is based on primary disabling condition as recorded on the PIP computer system. Claimants may often have multiple disabling conditions upon which the decision is based but only the primary condition is shown in these statistics.
- Appeal lapsed is where DWP changed the decision (in the customer's favour) after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at a tribunal hearing.
- Some decisions which are changed at the Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) stage, and where the claimant continues to appeal for a higher PIP award, are then changed again at tribunal appeal.

■ Public and Commercial Services Union: Public Appointments

David Linden:

[\[12274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will list the dates that she has met with the Public and Commercial Services Union since taking up her current post.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has not personally held meetings with Public and Commercial Services Union. However, officials from her Department continue to meet with PCS representatives on a regular basis.

■ Universal Credit

Justin Madders:

[\[10456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants had wages assigned to different assessment periods in each week from 1 April 2021 to 21 May 2021 under the legislation introduced in response to the judgment in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Danielle Johnson, [2020] EWCA Civ 778.

Will Quince:

To meet the Court of Appeal Judgment as soon as was practicable we introduced a solution based on a streamlined dispute process currently in place. This has enabled those who are affected to benefit under this regulation and claimants simply need to tell their work coach either in one of their regular discussions or via their journal if they think they are affected.

We expect to automate identification of affected claimants in mid-summer 2021. This will allow us to proactively correct awards before they are paid, without the need for the claimant to raise the issue.

Weekly figures of Universal Credit claimants who have their monthly-paid wages assigned to different assessment periods as described in the Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment Regulations 2020 for the period 4 April 2021 to 23 May 2021 are shown in the table below.

The data supplied is derived from unpublished management information and a database which relies on manual input. This was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

WEEK ENDING	VOLUME
04/04/2021	538
11/04/2021	662
18/04/2021	419
25/04/2021	189
02/05/2021	343
09/05/2021	260
16/05/2021	163
23/05/2021	115

Jonathan Reynolds:**[12132]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of households that will be claiming universal credit by the completion of the rollout.

Will Quince:

The latest Universal Credit forecasts for number of households, estimated each year are published in the Benefit Expenditure and Caseload Tables and can be found in, Table 1c, Table 2c and Table 3c, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2021>

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[13050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the annual cost incurred by universal credit claimants for childcare in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[13051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost of the childcare element of universal credit has been in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

Information around expenditure is not available by each Universal Credit element and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Claire Hanna:

[\[13247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the policy of joint universal credit claims for couples to help prevent financial coercion.

Will Quince:

If a couple are living together in a household, Universal Credit (UC) normally makes a single award to that household. It is for the couple in the household to determine where their single award is paid. This could be either a joint account or an individual account held by one member of the couple. In joint claims couples are encouraged to nominate the bank account of the main carer to receive the household's UC payment.

It is possible for a request to be made for a payment to be divided between two members of the household. This is known as a split payment. Whilst the Department is not intending to introduce split payments by default, we respond positively to such requests. The larger percentage of a split payment will be allocated to the person with primary caring responsibilities, such as childcare. This is to ensure the health and well-being of the majority of the household. It is important that we allow the individual who is experiencing abuse to decide whether they think split payments will help their individual circumstances.

We can take other actions to support those experiencing abuse, such as making a managed payment of rent direct to landlords. We also ensure that claimants who disclose abuse are signposted to specialist organisations for support.

■ Work Capability Assessment

Grahame Morris:

[\[12107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 June 2021 to Question 7143 on Work Capability Assessment, how many people have received a face to face assessment in Easington constituency since 17 May 2021.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not available.

■ **Workplace Pensions: Young People**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[12328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of increasing auto-enrolment of pensions to 18 to 21 year olds.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[12329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential effect on public finances of extending auto-enrolment of pensions to 18 to 21 year olds.

Guy Opperman:

Yes. The Government is committed to lowering the age range. We will be implementing the 2017 Automatic Enrolment Review ambitions in the mid-2020s.

Our ambition to lower the age limit for automatic enrolment to 18 will normalise workplace pension saving for more young people as they start work for the first time. The 2017 Review estimated that this change would bring an estimated further 910,000 young people into automatic enrolment putting an estimated extra £0.8 billion into pension saving (of which £113m is in tax relief). As the 2017 review makes clear, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to how employers might go about managing the costs of additional contributions and thus the total cost of the package to government. We will update our assessment on the impact of implementing the review measures when appropriate using the best available evidence.

The 2017 Review report was clear that implementation will be subject to learning from previous workplace pension contribution increases, discussions with employers and others on the right approach, and finding ways to make these changes affordable.

We will do this in light of the impact of the pandemic and our overall support for economic recovery, while continuing to support long-term saving, balancing the needs of savers, employers; and tax-payers.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Publication of a Tourism Recovery Plan

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Tourism (Nigel Huddleston):
[[HCWS88](#)]

The government has published a [Tourism Recovery Plan](#) which sets out a framework for the tourism sector's recovery from COVID-19. This is a cross-government plan which recognises that tourism supports, or is supported by, the work of nearly every government department. This plan brings together recent, existing and planned support for the sector by the UK government into one framework.

In November 2020, as part of the first Global Travel Taskforce report, the UK government made a commitment to bring forward a Tourism Recovery Plan in 2021 which was reiterated in the Prime Minister's Spring Reopening Roadmap published in February. The commitment to produce a Recovery Plan arose from the simple fact that tourism has been one of the hardest hit sectors of the UK economy by COVID-19.

The UK government wants to see a growing, dynamic, sustainable and world-leading tourism sector reaching its full potential and driving growth across all parts of the UK. Specifically, we are aiming to:

1. Recover domestic overnight trip volume and spend to 2019 levels by the end of 2022, as well as inbound visitor numbers and spend by the end of 2023: both targets are a year faster than independent forecasts predict;
2. Ensure that the tourism sector's recovery benefits every nation and region in the UK, with growing accommodation occupancy rates in the off-season, visitors staying longer and world-class levels of investment in tourism products and transport;
3. Build back better with a more innovative and resilient tourism industry, maximising the potential for technology and data to enhance the visitor experience and employ more UK nationals in year-round quality jobs;
4. Ensure the tourism sector contributes to the enhancement and conservation of our cultural, natural and historic heritage, minimises damage to the environment and is inclusive and accessible to all; and
5. Return the UK swiftly to its pre-pandemic position as a leading European destination nation for hosting business events such as trade fairs, conferences and exhibitions.

A short term focus of the Plan is to provide businesses with the support they need to return back to profit. For example, over £25 billion has already been provided to the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks, and tourism has been one of the most reliant economic sectors on measures such as the

furlough scheme. The government has allocated at least £19 million to domestic and international marketing activity to help with the recovery, with a £5.5 million domestic campaign led by VisitEngland already underway. Measures such as the VAT cut for tourism and hospitality, and a continuation of business rates relief for eligible properties will continue supporting businesses, and new proposals such as the introduction of a domestic tourism rail product and the National Lottery Days Out scheme that will help stimulate demand. There is a particular focus in the Plan on maximising the set piece events scheduled for 2022; Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, the Festival UK* 2022 and the Commonwealth Games, which will all act as major domestic and international tourist draws.

Once restrictions are lifted, the government will focus on building back better. For example, the Plan lays out significant levels of UK-wide investment already underway in tourism product and infrastructure, as well as new support due to come in over subsequent years, such as the £4.8 billion Levelling-Up Fund. We will also bring forward a consultation on the introduction of a Tourism Accommodation Registration Scheme in England.

A root and branch independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMO's) in England, led by Nick de Bois, is already underway. This review was launched in March 2021 and is assessing how best to structure and support tourism at a regional level. Other measures, such as an expanded ministerial advocacy and industry ambassadorial programme for business events, will help cement the UK's position as a leading European destination nation for hosting business events.

To ensure the success of the Plan, a new quarterly inter-Ministerial group for Tourism, chaired by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, will be set up to deliver and update this Plan as necessary. The Tourism Recovery Plan will be revisited at regular intervals to ensure the right policy interventions are in place. The government will work collaboratively with the Tourism Industry Council and other key stakeholders from across the tourism sector in order to get it done.

A copy of this document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

EDUCATION

■ Update on Teacher Training Application System

The Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb):

[[HCWS89](#)]

The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, published in January 2019, committed to helping people become teachers by introducing a new streamlined application system for postgraduate initial teacher training. This application system, known as the 'Apply for Teacher Training' service ("Apply"), is easy to use and designed to better meet the needs of potential trainees. The new service also ensures teacher training providers can make accurate decisions on whether their applicants are right for the courses they are offering.

During the October 2019 admissions cycle, this digital service was piloted by a number of School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers and schools across England. In

October 2020, the pilot was extended to eleven universities offering initial teacher training courses. The service has been designed and developed based on ongoing feedback from candidates, universities, and schools to ensure it is as efficient and easy to use as possible.

The new “Apply” service will fully replace the existing UCAS Teacher Training service from the October 2021 admissions cycle. I have instructed UCAS to decommission their teacher training service and all applications to postgraduate initial teacher training courses in England will be processed through the Department’s new “Apply” service from October.

TREASURY

■ Government response to ‘The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review’

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Kemi Badenoch):

[\[HCWS87\]](#)

At Spring Statement 2019, the government commissioned an independent, global review on the economics of biodiversity. *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review* was published on 2 February [HCWS752].

Having examined its findings, I have today laid before Parliament the Government response to the Dasgupta Review (CP 466).

In response to the Review, the government commits to: delivering a ‘nature positive’ future, in which we leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030; and ensuring economic and financial decision-making, and the systems and institutions that underpin it, supports the delivery of a nature positive future.

The response sets out the ways in which the government is already making significant progress towards delivering that future. For example, in England, reorienting agricultural support to improve the environment, animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions. The government has also committed to spend at least £3 billion of the UK’s International Climate Finance on nature and biodiversity over five years, and has set out a Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution which will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to create and support up to 250,000 highly skilled green jobs across the UK.

Building on our nature agenda, the response also sets out the ways in which the government will go further in light of many of the Review’s conclusions, including by:

- legislating in England for a binding target for species abundance to be achieved by 2030, aiming to halt the decline of nature;
- legislating in England for ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects through a new amendment to the Environment Bill which will be tabled shortly;
- ensuring all new UK bilateral aid spending does no harm to nature;

- committing up to £3 million additional support to the development of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures framework, which will support financial institutions and companies to report and act on nature-related risks.
- working with the Office for National Statistics to improve the way nature is incorporated into our national accounts and maximise their use in policy-making; and
- incorporating biodiversity into the UK Government Green Financing Framework, which will determine which projects are eligible for financing under the UK Government's green gilt programme.

The government's response to the Review is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review-government-response. Copies of the paper are available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office.